

CORPUS CHRISTI AND SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

A History of Art in an African-Venezuelan community

by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DEDICATED TO THE PEOPLE OF CHUAO

These years of contact with the *Chuaeños* have been a time of great learning of their generosity and their knowledge of life. An experience beyond imagination. Through them a discovery of another Venezuela has been made, one of sincerity and authenticity, which has been lost in the hustle and bustle of the cities.

I should also like to thank particularly, Migdalia Rodríguez, who accompanied me on several trips to Chuao, and helped me with the transcription of the tapes.

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ABSTRACT

For the past ten years I have conducted research in the town of Chuao (Aragua State), an area settled in the 16th Century, site of the oldest and most renowned cocoa plantation of Venezuela. By the mid-17th century, the owner turned control of the enterprise over to the Roman Catholic Church, which administered it through the Inter-diocesan Seminary until 1827, at which time, by direct order of Simón Bolívar, the plantation became the property of the University of Caracas (today the Universidad Central de Venezuela) until 1883. From then it came under the direct control of the State.

The inhabitants are descended from African slave populations brought in by Spanish colonists; and the area can only be reached by sea. The relative isolation of Chuao makes it a special place in which one can study the evolution of artistic and rituals forms. Chuao appears to be one of the few African communities in modern Venezuela which has actively maintained links with its past. The Chuao tradition has evolved in the local integration of official (Spanish Catholicism) and popular (slave African elements). This may well exemplify the evolution of artistical ritual forms in other coastal communities of north-central Venezuela from the time of Spanish Colonialism.

The thesis is centred around the principal festivities of the community of Chuao: Corpus Christi (featuring "devil" masquerade) and the festive cycle of Saint John the Baptist (featuring images of the Saint and his mistress). Both festivities are organized by societies, the Corpus Christi society led by men and the Saint John society, by women. These societies are thus responsible for all the different aspects of the celebrations, such as the preparation for the festival, rehearsals, stages of the festivities, masks, costumes, images, dances, music, songs, speeches and poems.

These festivities are placed within the historical background of the community, and plantation of Chuao including the possible origin of the Africans arrived in Spanish America during the period of the slave trade. Moreover, the importance of the religious tradition of Chuao for an understanding of these festivities is provided by the Doctrine of María Tecla.

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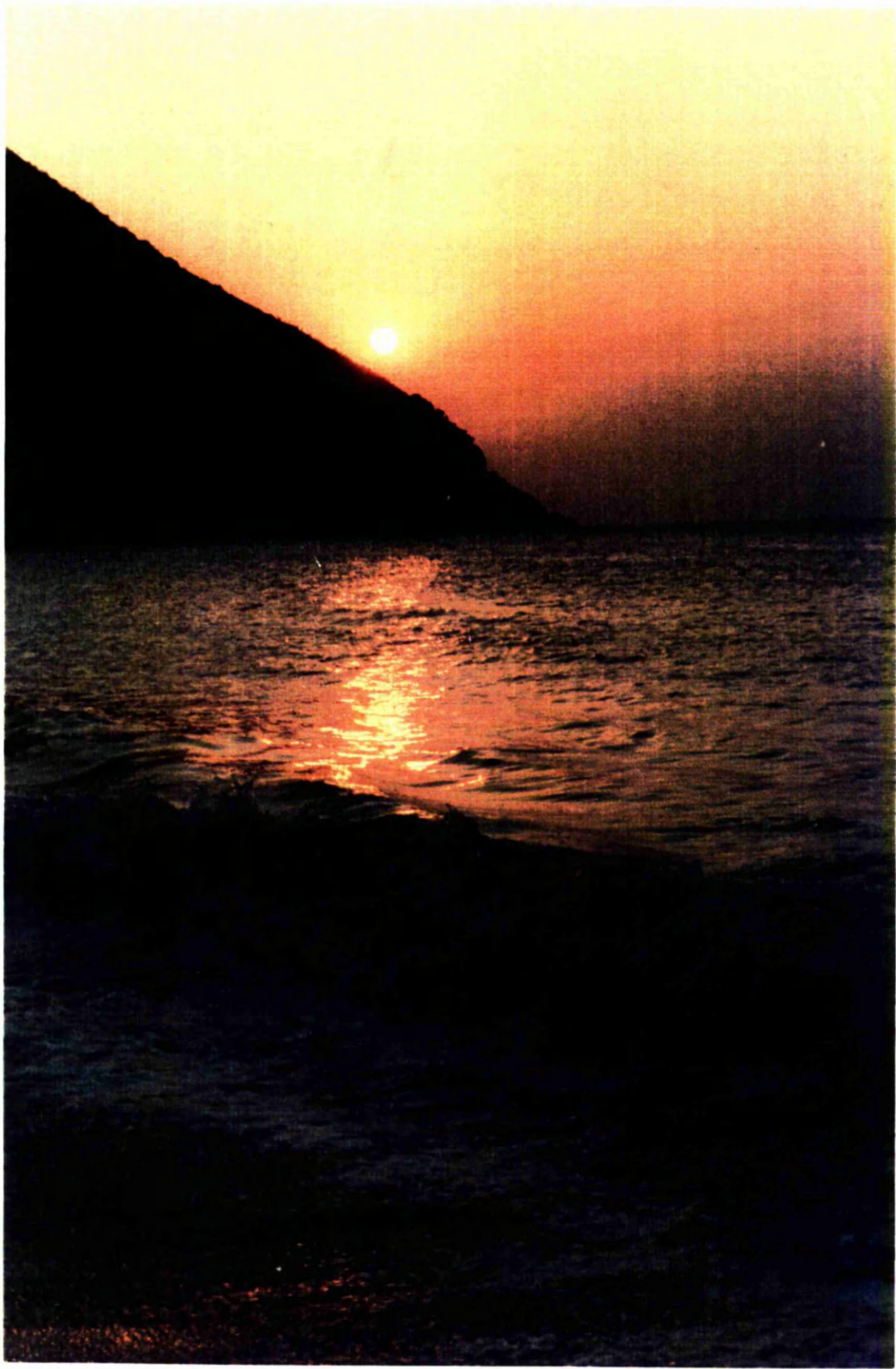
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Sunset in Chuao. 1987

Introduction

The beginnings of Afro-American Studies

The presence of African culture in the New World seems at first glance an obvious subject for study, because of the huge contingent of Africans brought to the Americas during the time of the slave trade, a period which lasted more than three centuries. (1)

Paradoxically, until recent years, scholars gave relatively little recognition to the cultural background of the Africans brought to the Americas. This could be due partly to the historical feeling of racial superiority by people involved in the slave trade and in the colonization of the Americas exemplified in the words of Fernando VII, in the appendix N° 75, (1817) to the Treaty signed between the Kings of England and Spain, on the abolition of the slave trade:

"The introduction of black slaves in America was one of the first dispositions made by my predecessors to develop the richness of those wide domains. The Indians were weak, so they could not be used in the exploitation of the mines which needed strong arms. The decision of having blacks in America did not create slavery because that institution was already common between the savage Africans. So, the traffic of Africans to America was done as a favour to them, because in this way they obtained benefits, such as being instructed in the knowledge of the true God, the Catholicism, the unique true religion and civilization. Obviously their life as slaves in America had been much better than being free in their own countries. But because of the care given by the owners to their slaves in Latin America, the black population has grown up, so it is not necessary to continue the Slave trade, and also our moral obligation to civilize the Africans does not exist any more, because so illustrious nation as Great Britain has decided to take in her hands the glorious task of educating the Africans in its own land... Signed on Madrid the 22 day of November 1817, on behalf of the two Kings: Henry Wellesley and José Pizarro (2)

Thus Afro-American studies are relatively new. In 1945 Melville Herkovits said: "Today, the scientific importance of Afro-American studies as a field for research is firmly established. Two decades ago studies in this area were not available."(3)

In Brazil the first studies began with Raimundo Nina Rodríguez in 1896. The first Afro-Brazilian Congress was organized by Gilberto Freyre, in Recife (1934) a second, by Edison Carneiro (1938) and a third by Arthur Ramos in 1941.

Between 1920-1950 there was increasing awareness of the subject. Melville Herskovits was considered the father of Afro-American studies in United States. His own research covered Haiti, Dutch Guyana, Trinidad Island Brazil and Africa, and he inspired academics such as Octavio Da Costa, Ruy Coelho and René Ribeiro to work in the field. As a result, in 1941, the Bureau d'Ethnologie, directed by Jacques Roumain was founded in Haiti.

Fernando Ortiz, who started the Afro-American Studies in Cuba, headed The **Instituto Internacional de Estudios Afroamericanos**, which was founded as a direct result of the *Primer Congreso Demográfico Interamericano*, celebrated in Mexico in 1943. Several attempts to publish journals were made at this time, but the majority disappeared with the exception of **Estudios Afrocubanos**.

During the 19th Congress of Americanist, New York in 1949, a section devoted to Afro-American Studies was established. Roger Bastide, an eminent scholar and specialist in the area, (4) tried to revive the International Institute and its review in 1954, during the 21st. Congress of Americanists. However, academic differences between Fernando Ortiz and Melville Herskovits did not permit it.

A change of perspective in the study of Afro- Latin American culture developed during this period. Originally, studies of black culture were taken purely from the exotic point of view, segregating culture and religion, but as further studies were made, an integration between these two within the socio-political context was made.

Herskovits initiated other approaches to the subject:

- the geographical perspective: (many scholars were sent to research in countries where the black population was not yet studied).

- the scientific view: researchers started to look at the ethno-historic and psycho-ethnographic perspectives. Also the importance of comparative African-Latin-American studies, the voodoo cult in Dahomey and Haiti, for example. Pierre Verger has made some interesting comparative studies, in the make-up of the Afro-Brazilian society.

The establishment of Latin American Studies within some higher institutions paradoxically did not increase the number of research publications. It is also interesting to note that during the period of 1961-65, in the United States and Canada, only 16 of the 842 PhD theses produced on Latin America dealt with blacks. In

Europe the same small proportion existed with 6 out of 502 investigations relating specifically to blacks in Latin America.(5)

The reasons for this are complex but range from the considered level of importance, to the economic reality. Few grants are given for such research and writers such as this one have had problems in financing such projects. With the dearth of materials, many of the basic tools for conventional research are unavailable, such as organized archives, and systematic communications between countries and institutions.

Works that are available include Paulo Carvalho-Neto on Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay; Gonzalo Beltrán Aguirre on México; George Washington Westerman on Panamá, Rolando Mellafe on Chile; Ildefonso Pérez on Uruguay, L.M. Díaz Soler on Puerto Rico and the Antilles, Jaime Jaramillo Uribe on Colombia, but in Central America and Argentina publications are very scarce. More documentation has been made obviously on Cuba and Brazil with valuable contributions from Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera. The prominent scholars in Brazil, include among others, Arthur Ramos, Manuel Querino, Gilberto Freyre, Edison Carneiro. (6)

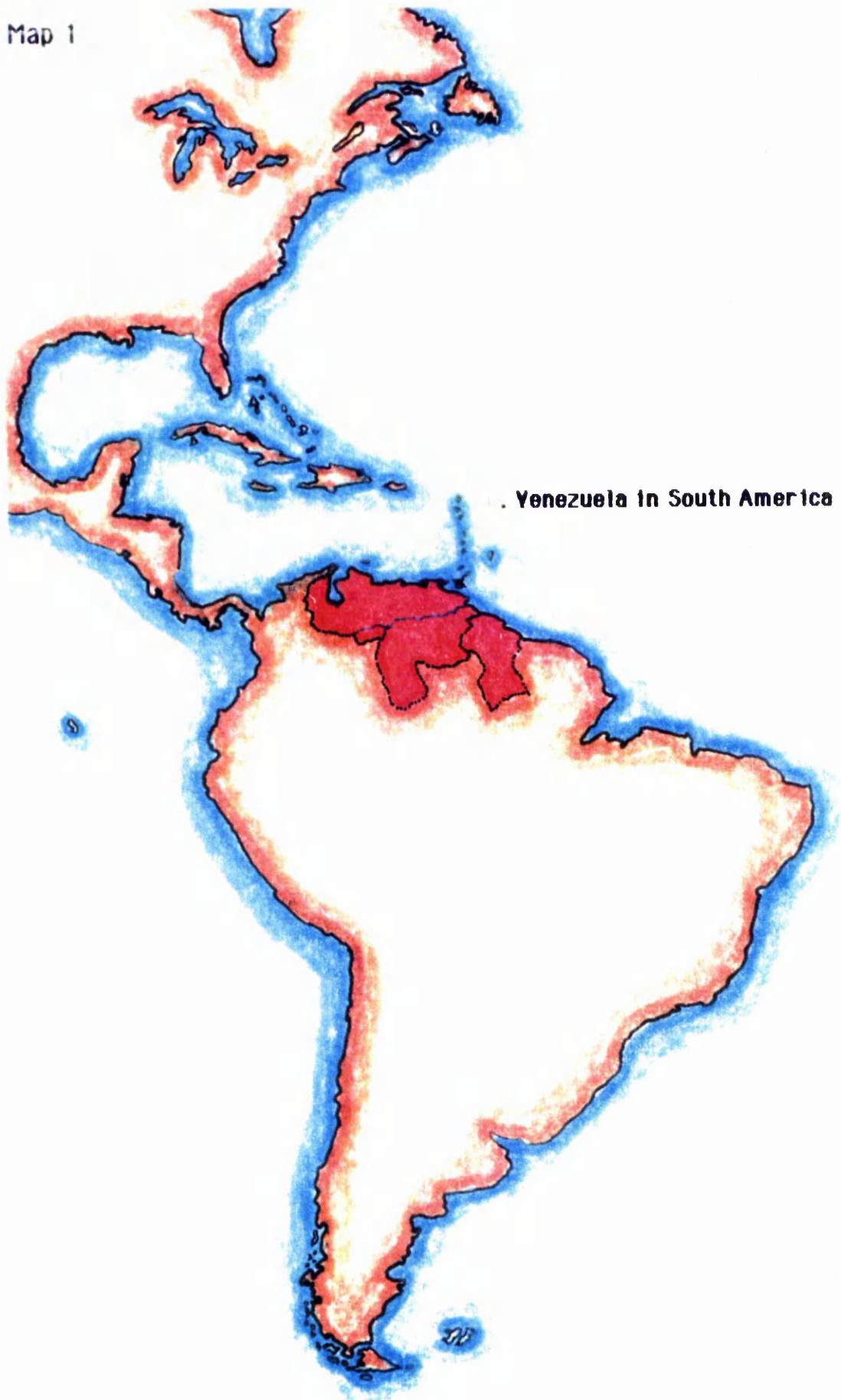
In spite of the research efforts which have since been made, Herskovits' observation remains valid:

"Then, the Afro-American field is replete with complex and challenging problems. More documentary and field research which will give a surer basis for generalization is a continuing requisite. But beyond this, better integration of data will not only yield more penetrating formulation of concept and theory for basic research, but will also afford approaches of major usefulness to those concerned with the solution of practical problems arising out of the ever-increasing contacts over the world between peoples having different ways of life." (7)

In Venezuela these studies began with Juan Liscano,(8) who represented the country in the first meeting of the Afro- Americanist in 1943. He also was the founder of the National Institute of Folklore in 1948.

Juan Pablo Sojo produced the first work on folklore in **Temas y apuntes Afro-Venezolanos** (1943). However, the first significant approach to the Afro-Venezuelan subject was made by Juan Liscano, in his book **Folklore y Cultura** (1950). Systematic work dealing with the role of African slaves in Venezuelan society started in 1960. Two specialists Miguel Acosta Saignes (9) and Federico Brito Figueroa (10) have published books, such as, **La Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela** (1967) and **El problema de la tierra y esclavos en la**

Map 1



historia de Venezuela (1972) respectively as well as numerous articles.

There are works in the area of music, such as **La música Afro-Venezolana** (1971) by Luis Felipe Ramón y Rivera. Other scholars include Ermila Veracoechea: **Documentos para el estudio de los esclavos negros en Venezuela** (1969). Angelina Pollak-Eltz: **Cultos afroamericanos** (1977), Angelina Clarac de Briceño, Daría Hernández and Cecilia Fuentes.(11) But there is not yet a general consensus about the importance of these studies. People work individually. There is yet to be a coherent group, which share and exchange points of view to establish a basis for this type of study and make it relevant to the social cultural context of Venezuela.

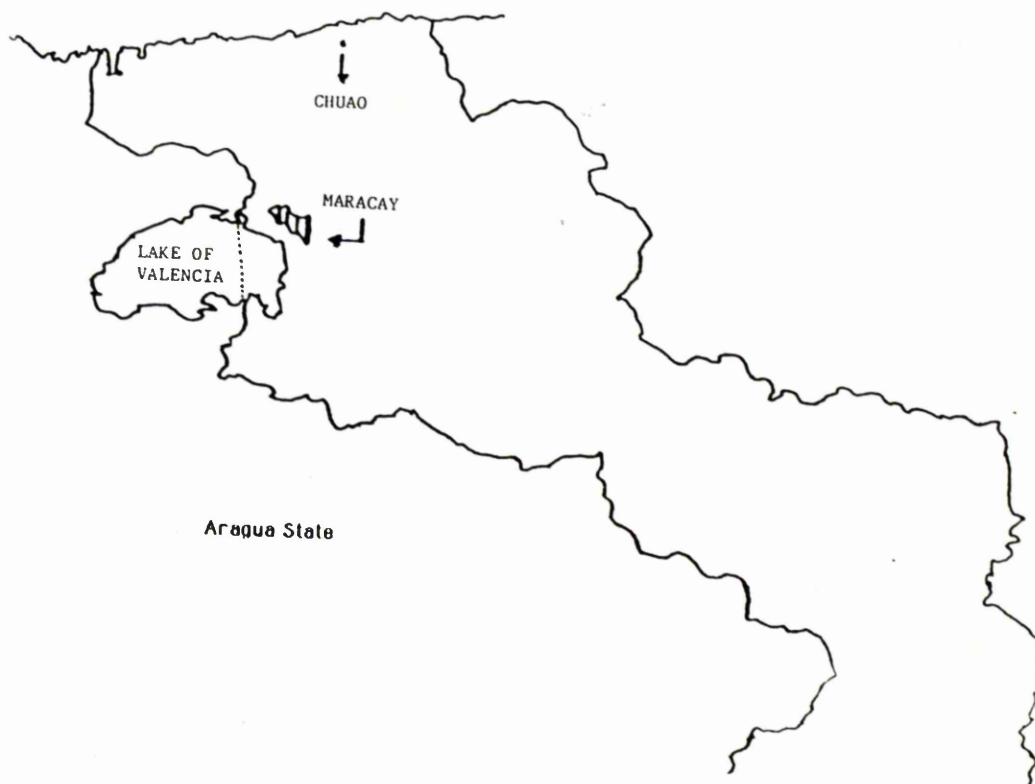
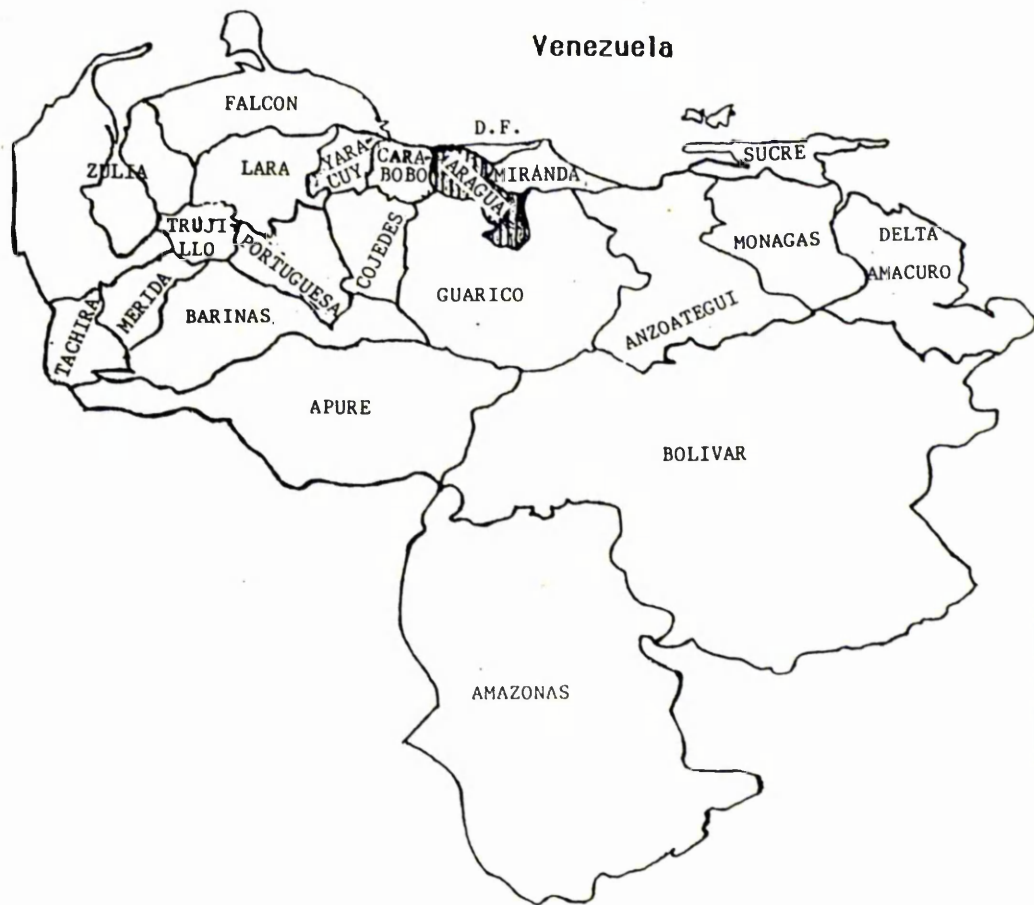
The choice of Chuao

In the year 1979, whilst teaching at the Simon Bolivar University, in the Department of Language and Literature, the writer became interested in working in the area of Afro-Venezuelan tradition, as a way of learning more about her native Venezuela. She therefore started looking for a suitable location for this type of research. In Venezuela slaves had been mostly concentrated in the states of Aragua, Miranda, Carabobo, Cojedes, Yaracuy and Dto. Federal (see map. 6, p.). At that time the Central University of Venezuela was beginning a rather ambitious project in Chuao, in Aragua State (12) which did not, however, include collecting the oral tradition. Thus began the planning and organising of visits to the town, in order to ascertain whether it was worth pursuing further studies there. Initial contacts with Chuao were convincing that it was indeed an excellent choice for further studies for the following reasons:

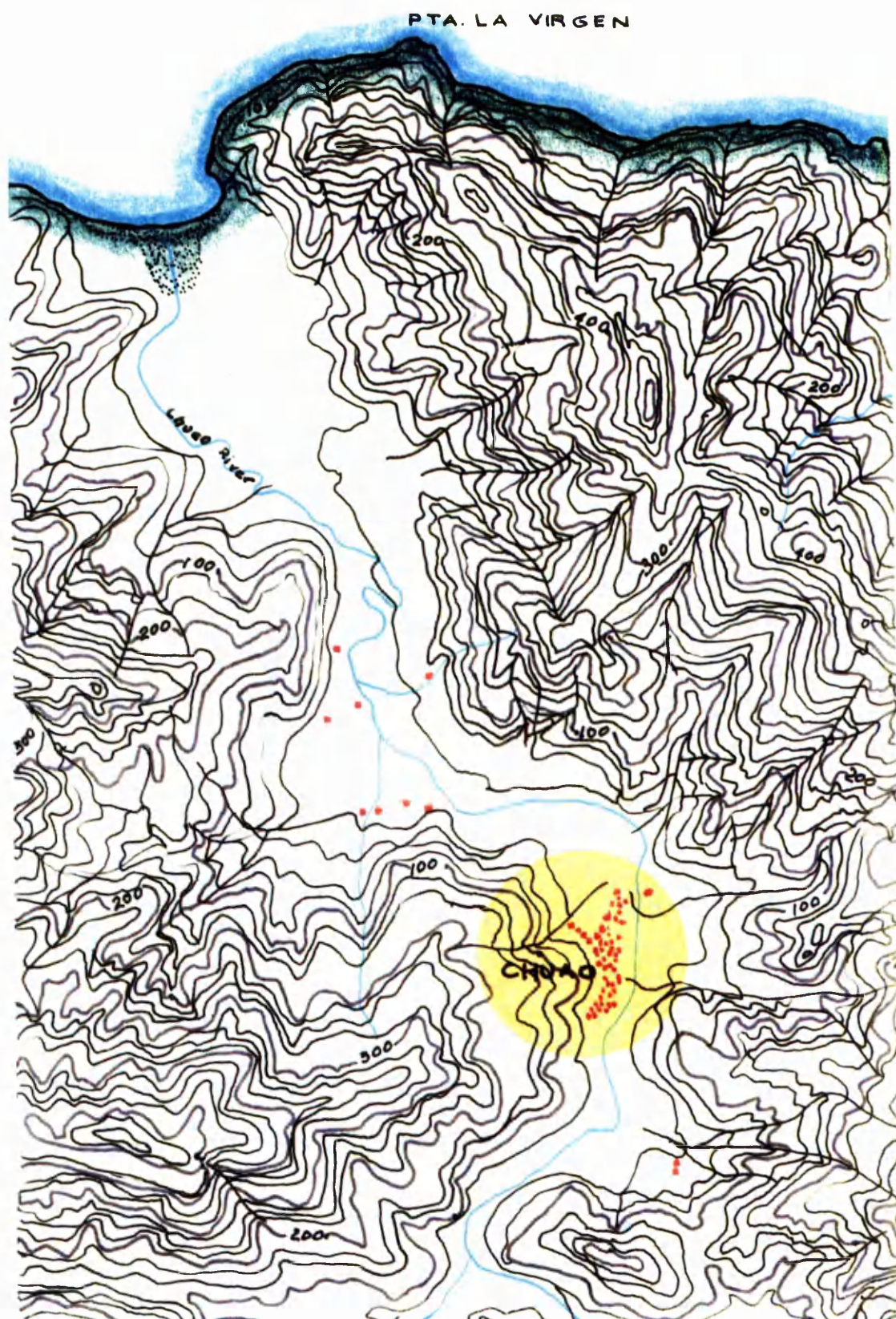
-The town of Chuao was a settlement established in the 16th century, and on the site of the oldest and most renowned cocoa plantation of Venezuela. (13)

-The development of Chuao and the economic importance it achieved from the latter half of the XVII to the middle of the XX century, was due to the production of cocoa, the most important product of the Venezuelan economy during colonial times. By the mid 17th Century, the owner of Chuao turned control of the enterprise over to the Roman Catholic Church, and the plantation of Chuao became an *Obra Pía*. (14) According to the conditions of the will imposed by the owner Catalina Mexia de Avila, the Church

Map 2



Map 3



administered the plantation through the Dean of the Cathedral of Caracas, the Franciscan Order and the Interdiocesan Seminary until 1827, at which time, by direct order of Simón Bolívar, the plantation became the property of the University of Caracas (today, The Central University of Venezuela) until 1883. From then it came under the direct control of the State.

-The majority of the inhabitants are descendants of former African slaves, who arrived there from the 17th Century onwards.

-The importance of the locality, whose written historical antecedents go back to the year 1502 (15), and which in 1592, as an *encomienda* (16), already revealed that the Amerindian had been cultivating cocoa and other fruits, even before the Spanish conquest.

-Its relative isolation (in the past and present) from the rest of the country, due to the difficulty of gaining access to the town, convenient only by sea. It is also possible to reach the place crossing the mountains from Choroni or from Turmero towns, a walk which takes more or less, three days. Today, this is still a difficult route to attempt especially during the winter rainy season.

-The rich cultural tradition of the town, which nevertheless has not been the subject of published systematic studies. The first reports of the festivities of Chuao were only obtained in 1970, when the National Institute of Folklore visited the place for the first time. This literature contains only some general descriptions of the festivities of Saint John and Corpus Christi, as well as an occasional article about the history of the locality.(17)

Corpus Christi and St. John The Baptist.

The study of the two ritual manifestations became the focus of the research: Corpus Christi (featuring 'devil' masquerades) and the festive cycle of Saint John the Baptist (featuring images of the Saint and his mistress) were chosen because of the privileged place the people of Chuao gave them in the annual cycle of festivities, and because of the celebration of these festivities in other parts of Venezuela, also performed by Africans . This research thus serves the dual purpose of giving fresh information on Venezuelan popular culture and providing a source for comparative study in Venezuela and more widely in the Americas.

In Chuao, both festivities are organized by societies, the Corpus Christi led by men, the St. John the Baptist, by women. They have a considerable number of members; more than two hundred in



1. Pilar Franco crossing the Chuao river, carrying wood to cook. In the background women washing. 1984



2. The plantation, a cocoa tree. 1982

each one, which amounts to approximately 20% of the total population, (including the children.)

These societies are responsible for all the different aspects of the celebrations, such as the preparation of the festival, rehearsals, organizing the stages of the celebration, masks, costumes, images, dances, music, song speeches and poems. These festivities preserve and maintain traditions which come from the time of slavery, and obviously have their origins in the Spanish colonial era. They are sources of energy, vitality and merriment. However, the members of these societies, and especially those who are in positions of direction within them, are highly respected and appreciated in the community.

The two societies in Chuao presumably have their origins in the religious confraternities established in Caracas in the 17th and 18th centuries, which would have provided the models for similar organizations throughout Venezuela.(18)

Documentary proof of the long tradition of these festivities, begins in America with the Spanish colonisation. Records indicate that confraternities were founded for each festival, in Caracas, and they occurred in the church of St. Maurice (19). In the year 1611 the confraternity of St. John the Baptist (20) was founded by the *Morenos Tari*, (free Blacks) (21) but ecclesiastic approval was given in 1646 by Pope Innocent X. From 1677 it was located at the Church of St Maurice. In 1751 they subsequently founded the confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament. (22) Significantly, these two groups, together with a third confraternity dedicated to the *Virgen de la Guía* constituted the most important brotherhoods of Africans in Caracas. The organizational unity of the *Morenos Tari* gave them a feeling of solidarity and a certain social superiority vis-a-vis the other Blacks. (Free blacks and slave blacks belonged to other *naciones* or brotherhoods)

The festivities at that time were celebrated with gala marches, and dances to drums. This is noted with particular reference to the processions of St. John the Baptist and the Virgin. However, in time the vigour of the drumming and dancing were considered to have changed the devout purpose of the celebrations. Consequently in 1793 the Captain General, Civil Mayor of the City, forbade the dancing to the drums. In a letter of 8th of June 1793, the Majordomo (23) of the brothers of the confraternity of St John the Baptist, the *Morenos Tari*, asked the Ecclesiastic Mayor of the City:

"to control the disorder of some *Negros libres* (Free Blacks) and *Negros esclavos* (Black slaves), who did not belong to this confraternity, they celebrated the Saint John's day with drums, lascivious dances, ridiculous ceremonies , noisy instruments, producing many immoral acts and it has become more serious if we consider the inclusion of people from other castas (social-racial class) who took advantage of these disorders. Because of that the sacred images were also carried without seriousness, the ecclesiastic Ministers and the devotes did not want to go in this crowd, but we (as members of the confraternity) were obliged according to our rules to assist. We cried painfully thinking of the gossip of foreigners, the dissension of good persons and the attribution of all this badness to us: who are the guides in charge of the Church and the cult of the sacred images. We beg you to forward our petition to the Captain General, Mayor of the City , so, he can forbid the Blacks to play drums and give us permission to inform people and priests that the dance to the drums and any other acts not connected with the sacred processions have been forbidden by your Excellency. In this form the owners of slaves can prohibit their slaves and the slaves' sons to go to the procession wearing ridiculous dresses and warn them that they have to behave in the same way as they do in other processions which are held in the city. As a result of this letter the Mayor published an Edict bringing to an end the dance to the drums in the city of Caracas. (24)

Objectives and Methodology

The objectives in writing this thesis are:

-To document the festivities of Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist.

- To set the performances in their socio cultural historical contexts:

Africa, Spain, Latin America, Venezuela and the church.

- To investigate the social purpose of the festivals, and the relation between the societies and the needs of individuals and families.

- To consider the possible role played by the African origins of Chuao people in the development of the celebrations.

-To describe the role of the Church in relation to the development of Christianity in Chuao and provide an integrated view of people's social and spiritual roles.

The methodology for this included:

-Participation in the life and festivities of Chuao over a period of 10 years.

- Close study of relevant published and unpublished documentary sources, particularly **The Obra Pía**.

- Interviews with key participants.
- Photographic documentation
- Tape-records^{ms} of music, songs, stories, and the Doctrine of María Tecla.

In this research, written sources both published and unpublished were utilized to support the field documentation of the festivities upon which this study is based: i.e. observations, and interviews with participants in the festivities. The majority of interviews were with those who could provide a historical perspective and had special knowledge concerning Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist by virtue of their seniority and participation. Topics covered included the history of the festivities which belongs to the cultural background of Chuao, beliefs associated with Corpus Christi and St. John The Baptist, descriptions of the performances, as of the present time and if possible, in the past.

The research was made by participating in as many as possible of the festivals and collecting information from participants. This included recording their descriptions of the events during the Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist festivals, and their views and interpretations of different aspects of the performances. Over the years numerous Corpus Christi and St. John The Baptist performances were seen and a photographic record of the masks, costumes, dances, different stages of the performances were made along with tapes of songs and drummings. These interviews and festival attendances, enabled a collection of the Doctrine of María Tecla, (25) which constituted the religious basis of the performances. Stories about beliefs and fears found in the St John the Baptist songs were transcribed in Spanish, and a colloquial translation into English was made. Participation at other celebrations of Chuao, such as, the Shepherds, the three Magi Kings and Holy Week were also made for the purpose of a comparative analysis.

Data on the history of Chuao, and the role of the Church was supplemented by documentary sources were derived from written sources, in particular the **Obra Pía** together with oral tradition.

An initial period of interviews was followed by participation in the daily life of the town, so that by the third period of research, trust and friendship had been established and the people were more spontaneous in their response to questions.

It was no longer the researcher who was going to pry into their lives, but rather a person linked to the community, and inevitably

this became more productive in helping towards the understanding of events and attitudes. Membership to the Society of St. John the Baptist was offered and approved by consensus. The town's trust and confidence has been further exhibited by being asked to become godmother to two children of Chuao.

Religious and cultural life of the area.

As a Roman Catholic country, Venezuela 's festivals are closely related to the church. One set forms the festive cycle of Christmas or of the winter solstice, and the other the festive cycle of St. John the Baptist, or the summer solstice. Christmas is in the solar cycle. Easter, however, is located in the lunar cycle as is the feast of Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday and Corpus Christi.

Actas del Cabildo de Caracas refers to ritual dances and communal festivities being celebrated in the city of Santiago de León de Caracas towards the end of the XVI Century. As Catholic religious practices spread throughout the country during the XVII century so did the celebrations. However, just as the dominant culture imposed their practices on the indigenous peoples and those from Africa, it can be argued that they were not passive recipients and that they in turn incorporated elements of their original culture. The form of these festivals, with the costumes, dance, music, etc, served to develop a sense of identity and cohesiveness within, and among the participants of any given community.

In addition to the Roman Catholic festivals, there are others which have their origin in the indigenous cultures, such as **Turas**, which on 24th of September, where in Lara and Falcon States dancers, miming animals, perform in front of an altar bearing fruits of its harvest. Another, **Diversiones**, of uncertain derivation, also includes dances imitating animals, or performing dances of death and resurrection, and dances weaving ribbons around a stick. Short dramas are also performed. Ceremonies must include those held on Independence day, involving military parades and patriotic programmes.

The catalogue is by no means an exhaustive one, and is subject to change as new festivities are develop^{ed} and others die out. This is a field of research in Venezuela that has scarcely begun to be explored.

Cycle of festivities in Chuao

According to the information supplied by María Tecla, Berta Aché, Augusta Chávez and other members of the Chuao community, the patron saint is given first place in the cycle of feasts. *Fiestas Patronales* are celebrated in just about every Venezuelan community. Chuao's patron is the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, whose feast day is celebrated on December 8. This patronage was established by the church, in the 17th. century, according to the wishes of the owner of the plantation Doña Catalina Mexia de Avila, whose first devotion was to the Immaculate Conception. The festivity is celebrated with the Mass and a Procession around the town with religious songs. (26) The feast of the Immaculate Conception is preceded by the celebration of the festivity of Saint Nicholas of Bari, which has also been celebrated in Chuao from colonial times. His feast day is celebrated on December 7, and the expenses of this festivity are provided by the Guzman Family, which has inherited this duty as a matter of ancestral tradition.

Saint John the Baptist is taken out of the church in procession on December 9, even though his feast day is in June. The reason behind this appears to be quite simple, that people take advantage of the annual visit of a priest, who always comes to Chuao in December for the festival of the patron saint, but hardly ever comes on the actual feast day of Saint John. Thus, the Society of St. John celebrates a commemorative mass for its patron on the 9th of December. The image of St. John is taken in procession, carried by four young boys and lead by the women who are members of St. John's Society. It is important to point out that during this parade there is no *Sanguero*, *cantos de Sirena* and *Golpes de tambor*, as on his proper feast day. (27) Only religious chants of the Spanish Catholic official liturgy are heard. The procession and Mass for St. John the Baptist have taken place on this day from colonial times until the present.

The festival of the Shepherds is celebrated at midnight on December 24, but is not part of the Chuao older tradition. According to Augusta Chávez, it was brought by a man who had originally come from another town of Venezuela, Mariara. After settling in Chuao, about sixty years ago, he himself established the tradition. The celebration consists of the adoration by the Shepherd to Jesus. (28) At midnight the *cachero* who is in charge of 'crowd control', masked and costumed with newspaper, leads pairs of dancing shepherds from the street through the churchyard and into the church to



. The procession of the Immaculate Conception. Patron's Saint of Chuao. 8th December 1989



1. St. John the Baptist in the church before the procession.
9th. December 1989.



2. The children carrying St. John the Baptist in procession.
December 9th. 1989

prostrate themselves in front of the crib. Although all the shepherds are men, each partner is dressed as a woman. Afterwards, each one, in the presence of María Tecla and Augusta answers questions posed by María Tecla and recite a verse composed for the occasion. When all the shepherds have presented their verses to Jesus, two more masked men *San Pascual Bailón* and *Pájaro negro* (Black Bird) appear dancing. When they finish, both prostrate themselves in front of the crib. Everyone then, departs from the church to watch the shepherds dance in the churchyard. Afterwards masked dancers perform their special dances, *San Pascual Bailón* as a drunkard, and the *Pájaro Negro* (Black Bird) perform dance where they mimic animals, causing fear to the children and laughter to the adults. After these dances, the image of child Jesus is carried in procession to another crib, which is in a house beside the churchyard. There, the community spends the whole night in vigil (29) celebrating Christmas by singing Spanish and Venezuelan carols called *aguinaldos*, as well as *parrandas*, which are Christmas songs with irreverent, secular themes.

On December 31 Chuao people bid farewell to the old year with a play that involves two principal characters: the old year disguised as an old man, and the new, dressed as a newborn child.

Next comes the Magi, or Three Kings, celebrated on January 5, eve of the Epiphany with a theatrical presentation in the churchyard in front of the church. Apparently, this is a unique survival of an *auto sacramental* (popular religious plays in Spain during the Middle Ages) in Venezuela. The play starts with the appearance of *the cachero*, who establishes the open space for the play. He is helped by another man who has a whip. It continues with the meeting of the three Magi who have been following the star. They decide to go together to Herod's palace to visit him and obtain information about the Nativity of the Saviour. They arrive but have an argument with Herod, who does not want to recognize them as Kings like himself. Herod expels the three Magi from the palace and orders the Massacre of the Innocents, but he himself has to escape from the churchyard pursued by children of the town, who insult him. The play continues with the entry of the Three Marías, (men dressed as women) the star and a group of singers, who accompany the three Magi to the crib in the church to render homage to Jesus, and give their gifts. The performance ends with the singing of *aguinaldos* by the players and the rest of the community.(30)



1. In the church the Black Bird and St. Pascual Bailón rendering homage to Jesus child. 1989



2. The cachero.



3. San Pascual Bailón.



4. Festival of the Shepherds.

Midnight,

24th December.

1989



4 The Black Bird carrying a bacinilla (chamber pot)



5. The Shepherds ' dancing .





The church of Chuso before the festivity of the Magi King. January 5th. 1980.



The Magi Kings.

1980

1. Two Magi Kings.

Manuel Ladera

at left



2. The Magi
Kings

visiting Herod



3. The Star



1. The Magi Kings following the Star to the crib of baby Jesus . 1980



2. The three Magi King going to the church to give their offerings to baby Jesus . The cachero watching them . 1980

Carnival is celebrated on Monday and Tuesday before the Ash Wednesday, with the election of a queen, people with different costumes, dances, parades, and the *juego de agua* or playing with water.

Holy Week is an important festivity in Chuao. Its celebration follows all the steps of the established ritual. A different procession is held each day, directed by the family in charge of that particular procession. Songs are sung in Latin, and in Spanish; there is a book which serves as a guide for the celebrations, which has been hand-copied by Próspero Sequera. (María Tecla's brother). It is a most interesting celebration, not only for the fervour observed, but also because it is reminiscent of an Andalusian past and the Holy Week festivities in Seville. Many songs remind us of the *cante jondo*, the popular Andalusian gypsy style of singing also known as *flamenco*; and indeed the oral tradition says that a Catholic priest of Andalusian origins taught these songs to the townspeople. A priest occasionally comes for Holy week and Easter, but never for Christmas and Epiphany. The celebrations are nevertheless performed irrespective of his presence or absence.

Next in the cycle of the festivals are The *Velorios* of the Cross of May (31); and Corpus Christi, a moveable feast which can fall either in May or June and is the final part of the lunar cycle of Easter.

Afterwards comes the cycle of Saint John the Baptist. This consists of the eve (June 23), the feast of Saint John proper (June 24), the celebration of Juana Manuela (St. John's mistress) (June 25 or during the festivities of Saint Peter), Saint Peter (June 29 and preceded by the eve), and to end the cycle of St. John the Baptist, the feast of the Virgin of Mount Carmel (July 16 and the eve).

On August 12th, there is a new ritual celebration, which only began in 1988, in honour of the Virgin who has been named patron of the fishermen of Chuao. The date coincides with the season of most abundant fishing.

On November 2nd., All Souls' Day is observed, but it does not carry with it the ritual importance the commemoration does in other countries (for instance, Mexico). Augusta said that in the past it was celebrated in front of the Cross of Forgiveness, where people lit candles to the souls of the dead and played special games. (32)

Plate 8

Holy Week. 1985



1. The meeting of *La Dolorosa* with the Holy Sepulcher



2. The Immaculate Conception meeting her Son.

The festivals are celebrated in areas where daily life takes place: the churchyard (where the cocoa is also dried) the church, the streets, the homes. The new August festivity is held at the beach, adding a new ritual space to the Chuao tradition.

These festivities constitute a parenthesis which interrupts the sequence of days, in contrast to the daily routine. The celebrations serve to structure time, but not in the automatic manner of a clock: rather, they give shape and form to time, which thus acquires distinct meanings. For one of the characteristics of Chuao is that one day is much the same as any other without any differentiation of days of the week. For example, they don't have any Mass or another special religious act on Sundays. It is in this manner that dates come to have sense and meaning at all, and their significance resides only in relation to the celebration that is being awaited. As a particular feast day comes near, food and drink are accumulated beyond the normal level expected in the town, as the festivities provide an occasion for communication, liberation of energy and expressions of joy. Nevertheless, the group is maintained and controlled by the directors of each festivity.

Each of these celebrations has social (particular families) historical (origins, development) and metaphysical (health, healing, renewal) dimensions. These interrelate and serve to define their significance for Chuao and to structure Chuao culture and society. They finally define a distinct Chuao identity within a Venezuelan national identity.

Notes

1. According to Curtin, Palmer and other scholars, the number of slaves who were introduced into Spanish America and Brazil during the whole period of the trade should be estimated around 4,2 million of the 9,5 million souls transported in the trade.

2. **Tratado definitivo de paz concluido entre el Rey Nuestro Señor y S.M. Christianísima por una parte y S.M. Británica por otra en París a 10 de febrero de 1763, con sus artículos preliminares y la accesión de S.M. Fidelísima a ellos, y al mismo tratado como también las Ratificaciones, Plenipotencias y demás actos de las potencias interesadas, de orden de su Majestad. Año MDCLXIII. Madrid.**

3. A preliminary analysis of bibliographic sources indicates that work in the area of Afro- American studies has been advancing. As examples, it could be said that: the Cuban Fernando Ortiz founded the Society of Afro-Cuban Studies in 1936; before he established the Society of Cuban Folklore (1924). He has written several works in the area among them: **Contrapunto cubano del tabaco y el azúcar; Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana, Historia de una pelea cubana contra los demonios, los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba**, and Nina Rodríguez in Brazil, his most known work is **Los africanos en Brasil**. Fernando Ortiz and Nina Rodríguez began the first studies in this field, arousing interest in the subject, when they showed the existence of 'Yoruba -style religion' in those countries. Other important Brazilian researchers have been Arthur Ramos, author of several works in the area, such as **O negro brasileiro, O Folk-lore Negro do Brasil and as Culturas Negras no Novo Mundo** and Gilberto Freyre, with his important book **Casa Grande y Senzala**.

In addition, following Fernando Ortiz and Nina Rodríguez, there seems to be a considerable amount of recent literature in Spanish America, according to the bibliographic information found in the following publications: **A preliminary Bibliography of African Cultures and Black peoples in the Caribbean and Latin American**, compiled by Robert Nadel (1972), **Afro-American Folk Culture**, Volume II, published by the Institute for the Study of Human Issues in Philadelphia and also Unesco published different works on the topic. One of the publications gather relevant materials under the title **Africa en América Latina**. Some dictionaries appeared in 1980, **the Dictionary of Afro-Latin American Civilization**, and **Race and Ethnic Relations in Latin America and the Caribbean**, by Benjamín Nuñez and Robert Levine, respectively.

4. Roger Bastide (1898-1974). French Sociologist, Philosopher and writer. He worked in the University of Sao Paulo, in the Faculty of Philosophy between 1938-1958, and in Paris, in the Sorbonne and the Ecole Pratique de Haute Etudes . Among his publications: **Les problemes de la vie mystique, Elements de Sociologie religieuse** (1936), **Sociologie et Psychoanalyse**(1950), **Le Candomblé**

de Bahía (1958), **Les religions africaines du Bresil**(1960) and **Les Ameriques Noires** (1966).

5. Roger Bastide. 1979. *Introducción a un inventario de Institutos y centros de investigación. Introducción a la cultura africana en América Latina*, p.229-230.
6. Julio Arosamena and others. *Introducción al estudio de los repositorios documentales sobre los africanos y sus descendientes en América. Introducción a la cultura africana en América Latina*, p. 154-160
7. Melville Herskovitz .**The New World Negro**, 1966, p 38.
8. Juan Liscano.(1915) Venezuelan writer and poet. He has been working as Journalist since 1938. He was the first to collect systematically Venezuelan popular music. He founded the Institute of Folklore.The first Venezuelan Review of Folklore was published under his direction in 1948. He organized the first festival of Venezuelan popular tradition, which was held on February 1948 to celebrate the election of Romulo Gallegos, as President of Venezuela. Among his publications: **Folklore y Cultura, Apuntes para la investigación del negro en Venezuela, Las fiestas del solsticio de verano en el folklore de Venezuela, Panorama de la literatura venezolana actual.**
9. Miguel Acosta Saignes. Anthropologist. Founder and Director of the Institute of Anthropology and History, and The School of Journalism in the Faculty of Humanities. Central University of Venezuela. Among his publications: **Latifundio y problema agrario en Venezuela**, (1938) **Petróleo en México y en Venezuela**,(1941) **Los Caribes de la Costa Venezolana**, (1946)**Estudios de Etnología Antigua de Venezuela**,(1961) **Estudios de Folklore Venezolano**, (1962) **Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela** (1966)
10. Federico Brito Figueroa. Venezuelan Historian and Anthropologist. Professor of the Central University of Venezuela. Ex-Director of the Postgraduate Studies of the Faculty of Humanities, Central University. He has published several works, among them: **Ensayos de Historia social venezolana** (1960), **La estructura económica de Venezuela colonial** (1963), **Las insurrecciones de los esclavos negros en la sociedad colonial venezolana** (1961), **El problema tierra y esclavos en la historia de Venezuela** (1985)

11. Angelina Pollak published in 1983 a **Bibliografía antropológica venezolana**. General courses have been established in some Universities of Venezuela. In the eighties some musicians and scholars became very interested in the subject and promoted a movement to rescue 'popular culture' . The results can be seen in the proliferation of Afro-Venezuelan musical groups. Some of them have done serious works collecting important material, and making a real contribution to these studies. Among them, Rafael Salazar, María Teresa Novo and Oswaldo Lares.

12. The Central University project stopped in 1983 and it has not yet been continued.

13. Mario Briceño Iragorry (a well known Venezuelan writer)in his article : **Cacao**, said that the best cocoa of the world was and still being the Venezuelan. Nobody can deny this qualification to the cocoa of Chuao." (p.50). Brillat Savarin (French magistrate, gastronome and writer) in his book **Physiologie du Gout**: "The cacao, or chocolate tree, is indigenous to South America, being found both in the island and on the continent, but the best fruits are from the edge of Maracaibo lake, the Caracas valleys and the province of Sokomusco. Introduced into Spain during the 17th century, it crossed the Pyrenees with Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip II and wife of Luis XIII; and at the commencement of the Regency was more in vogue than coffee. Linneo named the tree "theobroma" or divine food ." (pgs. 115-116). **Plantation** is an economic unity in which the relations of production are typical of the precapitalist system: (Slavers, slaves or servants in its American model and labourers), but its production is essentially to the exterior market ruled by the Capitalism laws. That was the case of Venezuela, specifically during the 18th. century.

14. **Obra Pía** . The plantations and *encomiendas* given to the church from the owners to administer and to enjoy the profit of them.

15. Alonso de Ojeda (Spanish conqueror). In 1502, in his trip around the Caribbean Sea, called the valley of Chuao and Choroni Valfermoso (beautiful valley).

16. **Encomienda**. (estate granted by Spanish kings to Spanish people, who become in possession of the Indian and the fruits cultivated by them. The *Encomiendas* were given, in theory for one lifetime until 1533, afterwards for two lives and later for three or four lives, but in practice the Spanish conquerors took possession of the lands for ever. The *Encomienda Indiana*,

was an institution very similar to the the medieval system of feudalism and more immediately derived from the model of Spanish properties. (Brito Figueroa, **el problema tierra y esclavos en la historia de Venezuela**, p.31)

17. In 1985, that same institute made a videotape recording of the Saint John the Baptist festivity. This video, was not edited, due to several problems in the Institute of Folklore, and finally the original was lost, however a copy of that original video was given to Berta Aché, first Captain of the Society of St. John the Baptist, Chuao)

The Central University also produced a videotape recording of the Corpus Christi festival that same year. There is also a little-known film about Chuao produced by Carlos Azpúrua in 1979, in which the town is presented through the accounts of its inhabitants, but the intention is eminently one of social protest. Efforts have gone no further. The Central University, as depository of the Chuao documents, published a first volume in 1968 entitled **La Obra Pia de Chuao** (1568-1825) using the documents in the University archives, and adding some articles, principally of a geo-economic nature. This is an undeniably significant work, for it is the only published documentary source about one of the most important plantations of the General Captaincy of Venezuela during colonial times. But none of the efforts previously mentioned treat the cultural dimension. Moreover, the compilers of the first volume, although they have promised to publish a second volume with the rest of the documentary material, have not yet done so .

-Finally, I myself produced an audio-visual program about three ritual festivities of Chuao (The Three Kings, St. John the Baptist, and Corpus Christi), which was presented in a local anthropology meeting. This effort constituted a sort of introduction, which served to reveal the need for more profound studies.

18. The confraternities, or lay brotherhoods, (societies) were inherited from Spain and were established in churches and parishes by different social groups, to organize communal religious activities, such as honouring particular saints, conducting festivals, or maintaining a church in good repair. Confraternities were not only for the elite. Urban Indian and *mestizo* sectors also had their confraternities. Some comprised different social classes, uniting them in corporate activity and emphasising the vertical bonds within society; others reinforced stratification and social hierarchy. In Brazil the *irmandades* of blacks and mulattos serves as a shelter in a white-dominant society, a source of religious service and instruction, a welfare system and a focus of corporate identity. In Spanish America, too, the

confraternities have an economic role; they were often mutual aid societies, owners of capital and property, and a source of employment and income for parish priests.

"The life of the parish was acted in great measure around this socio economic system. The *mayordomo* of a confraternity was a man of minor substance and probity within a community. It was his duty to organize the *fiestas* and the cult of Our Lady or the saint under his care, to guard the cult's material assets such as clothes, jewels, flowers and money, to supervise processions and to allocate the funds needed for these and the accompanying food and drink. The confraternity offices were often closely linked to municipal offices. A single hierarchy operated in communities at a political and religious level. It was also a family network. The confraternities were essentially lay organizations, administered by the laity for the laity. They were autonomous in their structure and finance, and they did not allow bishop or priest to interfere in their affairs; when they needed the services of a priest, say for a mass, they requested them and paid for them. Many of the religious *fiestas* of the confraternities were becoming profane celebrations; processions and vigils, according to some parish priests, were idolatrous in their excesses, and often the occasion for all-night drinking and dancing. So the church authorities sought to scrutinize the accounts, nominate the officers and supervise the activities of the confraternities, though not with complete success. In any case events were moving against the confraternities and reducing their significance in the life of the Church." (Lynch, John. *The Catholic Church, 1830-1930*)

19. In the year 1576, Caracas was invaded by a plague of locusts which destroyed plants and terrified the populace. So, people pleaded for the protection of St. Maurice and offered to build a church in his honour. It was built but destroyed by a fire three years later. So, the image of St. Maurice was placed into the Church of St. Sebastian, which started to be called by people as the church of Saint Maurice.

In the year 1608 the Cabildo (Municipal Council) of Caracas offered the church of St. Maurice to the Dominicans, but the priests did not accept it. In 1677 the Cabildo gave the church to the *Morenos Tarts* (the Tari Dark) , brothers of the confraternity of St John the Baptist, maintaining the Patronage of the church and with the condition that the *Morenos Tarts* continued to render honour to Saint Sebastian and Saint Maurice, whose images were placed in the centre of the main altar . The *Morenos* accepted it and they kept the cult of Saint John the Baptist, the two Martyrs, and later on they also took care of the cult to the Virgin Mary as *Virgen de la Guía* and to the Most Blessed Sacrament. So, these

three black confraternities functioned in the Church of St. Maurice during colonial times.

20. The confraternity of St. John the Baptist was founded in 1611, but the ecclesiastic authorization for its installation was given by Pope Innocent X in the year 1646, he said: "It is accepted the foundation of a a confraternity devoted to St. John the Baptist, formed by men and women *negros criollos*, (free slaves) *indios* (Indians) and *pardos* (African and Indian blood). The rules of the confraternity of St. John the Baptist were the most ancient of the three Black confraternities. The following two articles outline its activities and constitutions: 'the members of the confraternity could be of any social status and humble persons were welcome.' In relation to the celebration, another article said, 'that each year on the day of the Saint, it had to be celebrated with the Singing of Mass, procession and Sermon, and people had to pay alms according to the disposition of the Bishopric of the city. If people wanted to celebrate the Octave of the Saint, they were welcome to do it but to their own expenses. The confraternity did not pay for that. Until 1797 the confraternities of the church of St Maurice had many devotees outside the brotherhood, who gave money to support the celebrations of the festivities, but with the passing of the years they died out and the celebrations too because of lack of money. By the year 1808, the confraternity of St. John the Baptist, in Caracas, was in total decadence. Some documents of the confraternities of St. John the Baptist from the Church of St. Maurice are important to this work, because they named Chuao, and through that information it is possible to establish the links between them. E.g. : in the relation of the belonging to the confraternity the Administrator Fabian Gomez (1705-1713) wrote: "Nicolas Manzo Contreras gave 2.400 pesos to the Confraternity, from the Chuao plantation." In 1717 a woman, Tomasa Ana del Rosario, *Morena Tari* was elected to the position of Majordomo of the confraternity. (In an indirect way clarifies the role of women in Chuao, because that appears to be the antecedent of women as leaders of the brotherhood of St. John the Baptist). In 1752 José Francisco Liendo was elected Administrator of the organization. (the Liendo family were the owners of Chuao, so this Liendo has to be one of their former slaves.) (Veracoechea, Ermila. **Tres cofradías de negros en la Iglesia de San Mauricio en Caracas**.p. 317, 343, 345,353)

21. According to Miguel Acosta Saignes, there were many *Tari* in Venezuela, very important as members of brotherhoods in the Colonial Caracas. Fernando Ortiz did not identify them in Cuba, but Beltrán Aguirre said that they entered Mexico as slaves with this name, but they came from the surrounding areas of

the river Popo. So with the name of *Tari* were introduced into Mexico and Venezuela, people of Popo, from the south of Togo. (*Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela*, p.140)

22. The confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament was founded by the brothers of the St John the Baptist in 1751. It also had the support of the Authorities. It started to work in 1758, when the King of Spain approved the rules of the Confraternity. The first election of the Majordomo was held in the year 1759 , and the last according to the book of the Cabildo was in 1855. That was the last mention found in relation to this confraternity.

By the year 1816, five confraternities dedicated to the cult of the Most Blessed Sacrament were founded in different parishes of Caracas . It is interesting to point out that only one was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the one in the church of Saint Maurice. (Veracoechea. Op.cit, p.370-371)

23. The Majordomos of the confraternities have to be free slaves. In some opportunity a slave was proposed to have the place. The Bishop Mariano Martí (XVIII) established in a letter that slaves cannot be elected as Majordomos or have any administrative position within the community. (Veracoechea. Op.cit.p. 371)

24. Veracoechea. Op.cit. p. 324-325

25. María Tecla Herrera, eighty two years old woman of the community, one of the wisest women of the town, she is the repository of lore in Chuao, in charge of the religious preparation of children; midwife (until 1986), medecin woman. She plays an important role in the cycle of festivities in Chuao.

26. The procession of the Immaculate Conception this year was unforgettable , the young men carried on dancing with rhythm, they did not get tired, and the whole community sang old songs, only known in Chuao, and the Hymn of the Virgin, with real fervour, beautifully, and also her aguinaldo: "8 of December, the day of Mary, mindful feast, is the birthday of the Immaculate, how wonderful you look Immaculate, how beautiful you look Immaculate. We visited houses until 3 a.m. and we continued because the carriers were in mood to do it." (Augusta and María Tecla, 1989)

27. See Chapter 3, for a description of these kind of music and dances.

28. The adoration of the Shepherds was a very well known play during the middle ages. " For instance, on Christmas day an amplification or embellishment known as a trope, ascribed to Futilo of St. Gill was as follows: " Today must we sing of a child, whom in unspeakable wisdom this father begat before all times, and whom within time, a glorious mother brought forth. Then came the interrogator, 'Who is this child whom ye proclaim worthy of so great laudations? Tell us that we also may praise Him. The response follows: ' This is He whose coming to earth the prophetic and chosen initiate into the mysteries of God foresaw and pointed out long before and foretold. This dialogue was elaborated into a symbolic drama with two deacons behind the altar singing: 'Whom seek ye, say ye shepherds?' and two cantors in the choir in the guise of shepherds replying . In due course was added a long series of Old Testament characters and incidents in the form of Prophetiae leading up to the Nativity, portrayed by the placing of the *bambino* in the crib behind the altar and the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem. Singing boys concealed in the triforum played the role of the heavenly host breaking forth into an exultant Gloria in excelsis at the appropriate moment as the shepherds in the persons of five cantors advanced towards the praesepe where two mid wives awaited them. Two priests with two midwives met them singing quem quaeritis; and the play closed with the adoration of the Shepherds" (E.K. Chambers, **the Medieval Stage II**, p. 240)

According to Aquiles Nazoa in **Venezuela suya** "the tableaux of Shepherds are organized in the vicinity of Valencia, in the towns such as Mariara, San Joaquín and Aguas Calientes (Carabobo State) during Christmas time. Carols and all forms of Christmas music are the oldest elements of Spanish music introduced into the Venezuelan folklore, from whence originate the traditional carols and songs sung throughout the country in December to praise the Infant Jesus. In this Christmas music, the oldest and most curious expression is that of the Shepherds. The scene is acted by a group of men - most of them peasants - who, to keep a vow made to the saint, during Christmas days dress themselves up as shepherdesses in the Spanish style of Lope de Vega's times, and thus attired, gather in church during Christmas eve to sing and dance around the image of infant Christ. The representation is in various parts and the dialogue is in the manner of a theatrical piece, the transitions in the action being marked by changes in music. " (p.61)

In December 1989, at Shepherd's time, María Tecla commented when Jesus Franco passed by : "Jesus is the only one who took care of Chuao. After the fall of the dictator Pérez Jiménez, he took on the task of preserving the traditions of Chuao. That is why we continue celebrating all our festivities. But last year, for example, to perform the Kings, Magi, he had a problem because he had a

very hard task trying to find boys to perform the role of angels. No one wanted to dress as an angel, because of the girls. In the end he solved the problem, but it was very difficult. You see things are changing every day." (1989)

29. *Velorio* is not to be confused with "a wake for dead", a common use in Caribbean Spanish. Here, *Velorio* refers to a celebration, an entertainment held in the evening on the eve of Saint's day. The *Velorios* are a general pattern in all popular Venezuelan religious manifestations. (In the case of Christmas it is held after midnight)

30. According to the information about Festivals in the middle ages, the Stella play, was very common, for example at Milan in 1336, the Stella play was presented as follows: "To the procession of the three Kings with their gifts guided by the star, and the reading of the liturgical gospel, in due course were added other scenes connected with the Nativity, such as the Massacre of the Innocent and the meeting with Herod. In the Strasbourg play the magi met the shepherds on their way home from Bethlehem after leaving Herod, who incidentally assumed increasing importance as an impersonation of the principle of evil represented as a raging tyrant. In the Freising texts the three episodes are combining the scene opening with the angelic salutation from one of the pastores, followed by the meeting of the Magi with Herod, the dream of St. Joseph, the flight into Egypt and the grief of Rachel weeping for the children after the Massacre of the Innocent. But the Stella play is absent in this manuscript although the first text devotes much of its space to the Magi and their relation with Herod." (James, E.O. **Seasonal feast and Festivals**. (pgs. 239-246).

This note tries to point out the medieval origin of the festivity in Chuao, which is a kind of combination of the Stella play, in which Herod represent the devil. Other personages indicate the introduction of non European elements, such as the *cachero*, which seems to be more 'African', including the dress. He also appears in the Shepherds play performing the same role.

31. The *Velorios de Cruz de Mayo* are held during the month of May starting the 3th and ending the 31st. The people gathered around a cross made of flowers and make music, sing songs and recite verses. There are a variety of sacred and secular themes, but in their majority they belong to the second category. "The finding of the cross in Mexico, Peru greatly impressed the early Spaniards. It seemed to them definite proof that Christianity had by some means been preached in Mexico and Peru, and there is no doubt that they made great use of this idea in their work of converting the Indians. The cross was founded in

many different places and forms. At times the cross takes the form of a tree at times it appear to have an infant being raised up in adoration. It is generally held that the indigenous cross had nothing to do with redemption, the core of the significance of the Christian cross. But regardless of what its origin might have been, or what its significance was, it was one of the points of contact between the two religions which served the early preachers very effectively". (B.C. Hednick, **Religious syncretism in Spanish America**, p. 6)

32. "In Chuao, when I was child the month of All-Souls was very especial. You didn't hear any music, and no children were to be found on the streets at 9 p.m. At that time the elders told us that we have to be at home, because the souls came out to say their prayers, and if they found a child in the way they took him away with them. So, not a single child stayed outside after 9 o'clock. We were early to light our candles to the souls on the Cross of Forgiveness. All people from Chuao came to the Cross of Forgiveness and each lighted a candle. That was nice, all the place around the cross was full of candles. We also used to play some special games belonging to his time of the year. It consisted of doing a circle and all the children holding hands danced while the elders sang : Today is the day of the Saints, in the pasture ground of St. Andrew; working in my little piece of land (conuco); they came to eat me, so I fell down; (every child who was playing, fell down) Gregorio is already dead, he died in a dark room and the candles that they put were four ripe plantains. All children ran away going home when they heard the name of Gregorio." (Augusta, 1989)

CHAPTER ONE

Chuaao: Some Historical Data

The economy of Venezuela in Colonial times

In Colonial times, the economy of Venezuela depended almost entirely upon cocoa production, although there was some tobacco, sugar cane, cotton, cattle and indigo farming. Cocoa was the most important food export from Venezuela to Mexico, Spain and other European countries. Mexico became the predominant buyer of Venezuelan cocoa, with consumption recorded by Eduardo Arcila Fariás "In the 18th century, as having a consumption around 360,000 fanegas of cocoa against 70,000 exported to Spain. Ecuador and Venezuela competed to dominate this very important Mexican market, but whereas Venezuelan cocoa was of a better quality its production was very limited compared to Guayaquil (Ecuador), which produced three times as much but an inferior quality of cocoa." (1)

In the 17th and 18th centuries this Venezuelan economic dependence on cocoa production helped the plantation owners to become very rich. They were called colloquially "the big cocoas" an expression still used today in Venezuela, to identify the "nouveaux riches". In the 19th century, coffee supplanted cocoa as the mainstay of the Venezuelan economy and the cocoa plantations became much less profitable. It could be said that the history of cocoa production encapsulated the socio-economic history of Venezuela during the colonial period reflecting the economic expansion and decline, the formation of social classes and their differences and struggles. The most important socio-economic distinction in colonial times was between the slave masses and the minority class of landlord, who had a feudal mentality, developed around the production of cocoa.

Chuaao was one of the most important cocoa plantations of colonial times, world-famous for the excellence of its product. Nowadays its name is still known in the trade centres for cocoa. But Chuaao, a Caribe Indian word, is the name of a humble settlement in the Mariño District of Aragua State.

Chuaao: an overview

The physical features of Chuaao must be described in relation to the broader topography of Venezuela. It has a geographically



advantageous position facing the Caribbean Sea. Chuao is in a deep valley belonging to the Coastal Mountain Chain, drained by the river Chuao, which is formed by the confluence of the The Tamaira and Medio Rivers and the Sinamaica Creek. The Chuao basin covers 380 kilometers. The climate of the area is of the high inter tropical type. It does not experience seasonal change during the course of the year. As in most areas of Venezuela, climatic interest centers on rainfall rather than on temperature and the pluviometric pattern is revealed in the type of vegetation. This change from xerophytes in the lower regions, to the dense rain-forest type in the subtropical mountain jungle. The soil is fertile. The inhabitants of Chuao grow cocoa, the main product of the valley, together with coffee, maize, plantain, banana, yam, sweet potato, and many other varieties of vegetables and fruits, but they are cultivated on small pieces of land called *conuco*, near the river. They are not for export but to supply the needs of the people of Chuao. The valley also has many varieties of tropical trees, including mango, palm, jabillo, ceiba, mijao and bucare for example. In Chuao the people have traditionally augmented their basic farming economy with other activities such as hunting small animals and gathering wild fruits. Sea fishing is common. The Caribbean ensures a prodigious quantity of fish along the coast, especially from May until August some of which is dried for preservation. Nowadays cocoa and fishing form the economic basis for the survival of the Chuao community.

Chuao has a population of around 1,500 and 99,5% of the inhabitants are native to the area. The majority are black, descendants of African slaves, who were settled in Chuao from the 17th century onwards, to work in the cocoa plantation.

It is interesting to note that in Chuao today, although the producers of cocoa are now free from the slavery of their past, the modern democratic government controls the price of cocoa and its production through the National Cocoa fund, which is under the control of the Agrarian Institute. (see p.70) This public body establishes, at national level, the price which will be paid to the producers. It does not give them any advice, neither does it promote or control production: its only interest is the collection of money for the crops. In this way, the system establishes a new form of exploitation, wherein the beneficiaries are not those who produce the cocoa. The producers are given no incentives, for although the government agency does grant them credit to finance cultivation, the

people who plant must sell their cocoa at the fixed price, in order to pay off their debt and pay their labourers. They can never amass any capital. Every year, the same cycle is repeated. The administrators of the plantation are, in general, inhabitants of Chuao, but they are not given the job on the basis of merit, but rather in accordance with their sympathy for the particular political party which is in power at any one time. When elections bring changes in the governing party, changes also occur at the level of the Chuao plantation, even though it is fairly remote from the capital and the central powers. In this way, a new dependency has been established, one which takes the place of the slave regime of colonial times.

In recent years, fishing has assumed more importance and become very profitable. As this study has been researched over a period of years it has been possible to document the changes which have occurred by this shift in the economy. Historically, the majority of the people who lived in the town seldom went down to the beach, and were usually only seen there when they had to travel to Choroni, Maracay, and so on. Things started to change around twelve years ago when townspeople started to visit the beach more frequently. A group of enterprising men formed a company and began fishing on a larger scale. The success of their first sales encouraged them to develop their fishing activities. Perhaps their best period was 1982-85, when they received significant support from Cheito Casanova, Governor of the State of Aragua at that time, and a member of the ruling Christian Democratic party. Politics aside, Casanova proved himself to be an honest and capable democrat, concerned for his country and, in particular, for the state he was assigned to govern. Some important advances came to Chuao during his tenure. For example, electricity was brought to the town, from Choroni across the edge of the Coastal mountains. Until that time, a small local generating plant had provided energy, which was turned off at ten every evening. Concerned with education, Casanova sent three teachers to Chuao, to assist the one existing teacher, who was one of the townsmen. The governor gave support to the town leaders in their efforts to build a sports field and form musical groups. Moreover, he visited the town frequently and tried to provide for some of their many needs. Sadly many of this governor's flourishing projects were cut off by his death, which coincided with a change of government and of the ruling party.

This change paralysed the policies instituted by the Christian Democrats; the people of Chuao who now considered themselves to be 'in power' belonged to the *Acción Democrática* party, which took control of the plantation and established other priorities. Nevertheless, the former leaders have continued to exert their influence, though their party is no longer in power. Thus Chuao reflects in microcosm the problems that beset Venezuela as a whole in its pursuit of progress. But Chuao has always reflected the problems of the country at large and its geographical isolation only make for a difference in degree not of kind.

Yet, and this is the important point to be made, fishing as an activity has continued to gain in importance. Many of the people who worked in the plantation have gradually turned to the sea. Cocoa continues to be cultivated, but it is being replaced by fishing as the principal source of income for the town. Even commerce with Curazao has grown. Apparently, such trade never disappeared totally,(2) since some of the Chuao fishermen have always sold their catch to foreign boats from Curazao. At present, with the devaluation of the Venezuelan currency and the consequent relative rise in value of the U.S. dollar, the fishermen find sales to foreign boats more attractive and profitable. Thus, the Chuao fishing fleet today sells most of its catch to foreign ships, the majority coming from Curazao, where they have gone in search of this trade.

This in no way implies that the town's economic situation has improved. Such trade is still essentially the sale of raw produce, with no technological or industrial processes involved. It is subject to the vagaries of nature, years of abundance and years of scarcity.

In summary, the economic life of Chuao is based on the production of cocoa and on fishing. Other fruits and vegetables harvested are consumed in the town. Commercial transporting has been started by the Martínez family in Chuao. Their ownership of a truck has provided the means to transport the produce from their lands to Maracay to sell on the open market. Within the last three years a few small hotels have been opened in the town of Choroní, and tourist excursions are organised at weekends. This generates some income for the Chuao fishermen who own boats with outboard motors, because the hotel owners contract them to ferry the tourists about. Rivalry has begun between the boat owners of Chuao and Choroní for this trade, but, obviously, the location of the hotels in the town of Choroní works in favour of the fishermen from that locality.



The majority of people over fifty with few exceptions, are illiterate. Although today an adequate primary schoolhouse exists, the human resources necessary to provide the range of educational needs are still lacking and the opportunity for continuing education beyond the first few primary grades is dependent on the families' economic position. The wealthier families support their children through schools in Maracay which, although they have many deficiencies, are superior to those in Chuao. Students often experience difficulty in succeeding because the disparity between the schools is so great .

The social organisation of the town today exhibits considerable cohesion between the groups, and no great differences are apparent. The principal socio-economic division that can be identified is between the workers in the cocoa plantation, farmers, and fishermen, and those who engage in commerce. This last group control the provisioning of the town, because all non-agricultural products must be brought in from Maracay. The majority of the townspeople, who must purchase provisions in their general store, feel that they are being exploited. Moreover the one policeman in Chuao appointed by the government has no real power to act in the interests of the people. Social control appears to be in the hands of certain individuals who have emerged as natural leaders due to their work for the benefit of the town; for example Jesús Franco, Pedro Sosa, Sebastián Morillo, and Gallo (the owner of some fisheries in Choroní and Maracay), are all leaders who have their followers and supporters.

Subsistence and survival become more costly every day. In spite of their history of relative isolation from the rest of the country some crumbs from the Venezuelan petroleum boom fell the way of Chuao. In recent years the townspeople became accustomed to the availability of canned goods, cleaning products, toilet tissues, baby food, for example, and to using many luxury items, such as radios, television sets, record players and jukeboxes. The present economic crisis facing Venezuela has forced them to change these newly acquired habits. One indication of this is that lately, when I have visited the town, instead of asking me for one of these luxuries as a present, many ask me to bring them staples such as cooking oil or milk. However the newly established taverns have flourished. Ten years ago, there were only two such establishments, which were a place of meeting for the community in the afternoons and evenings. Today seven, run as bars, can be found in the town. The beverages

generally consumed are beer, rum, Pepsi Cola, and other carbonated drinks.

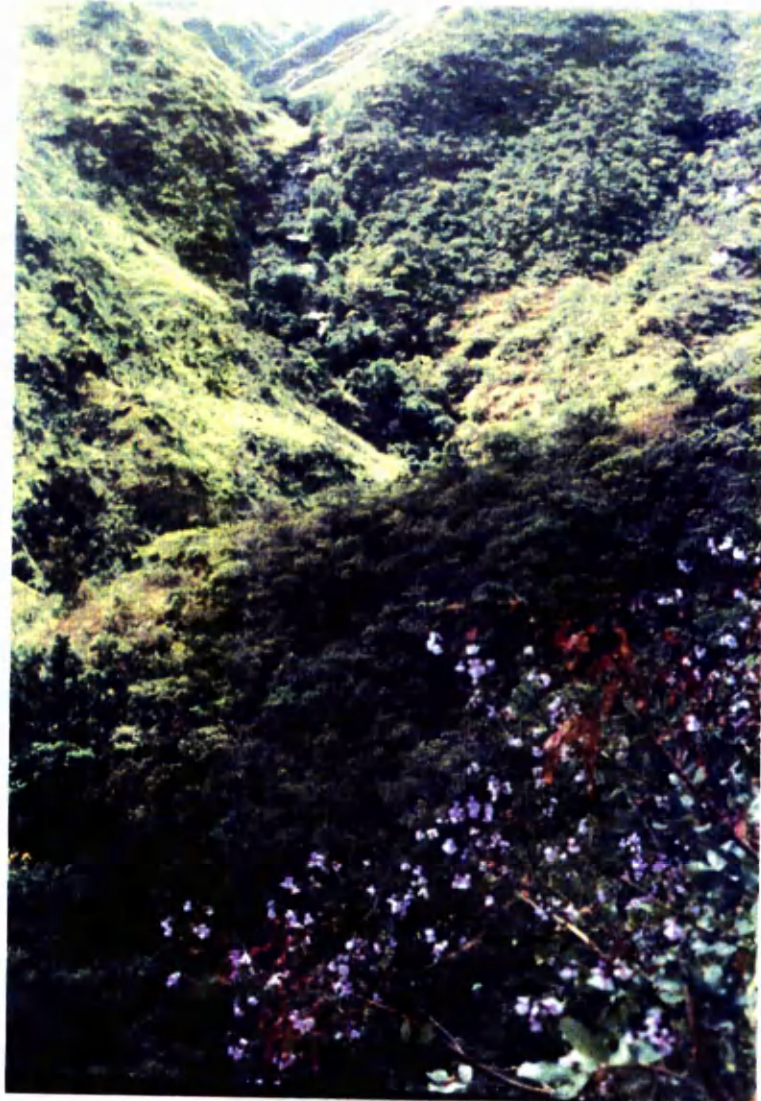
Interestingly, the sudden economic change suffered by the country at large has turned the people of Chuao back to traditional, long forgotten -and much more nutritious- forms of nourishment. The abundant fruit products of the zone, which had been insufficiently utilised before, are now being made into fruit juices and are taking the place of the rather expensive commercial soft drinks. The sale of home-made ice cream and sherbert has become popular, as a handy substitute for the beverages which can no longer be purchased by the local people.

It is important to point out the role played by the two organizations, the Corpus Christi Society and the St. John the Baptist Society, in the social control of Chuao. Since the life of the town is ruled by the religious calendar, the festivals impart meaning to the day-to-day activities and, mark the passage of time for the populace. The two societies that govern the religious festivals thus also govern the social order of the community.

Chuao in 1979: The journey there, arrival and first impressions.

In September 1979 three lecturers of the University Simon Bolívar and Central University , set off for Chuao. It took two hours of driving through the valleys of Aragua, to reach the city of Maracay, and then on to Choroní, a sea port which is a boat ride away from Chuao. The narrow road to Choroní winds for 70 kilometers throughout the tropical rain forest designated as part of the Henri Pittier National Park. It had been built with picks and shovels by prisoners in the 1920's, during the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez.(3) The road was paved in the 1970's, which made access to Choroní notably easier. This part of the journey took over two hours, not because of the distance but rather due to the difficulty of negotiating the road through high mountains. Driving among trees hundreds of years old, it was possible to discover waterfalls that fell from high in the mountains, and listen to the songs of birds in the great solitude of the region. Only the murmuring forest could be heard, for the noise of the city had been left behind. Reaching the highest point of the road; the temperature was quite cool, in contrast to the intense heat of Maracay below. Mist covered the heights as the descent began. Slowly, the heat returned, for the sea was near. Before reaching the port, the road passed through seven rural

Plate 9



in route to Chuao.
1989



settlements, the most important among them being Uraca, where Gómez facilitated an electrical generating plant. Although the plant is no longer in operation, the building remains; it is an enormous construction in the middle of the jungle, refurbished some years ago by a Jesuit priest, Ignacio Castillo. Rounding a curve, the town of Choroni appeared. It seemed to be taken from an album of memories, reminiscent of the apparent tranquillity of colonial times.

After entering Choroni the descent continued towards Puerto Colombia, the place where one boards the boats for Chuao. These were the large wooden skiffs commonly used by Venezuelan fishermen, to which outboard motors were attached. There was a lot of activity on the beach, where men with loads of groceries bought in Maracay waited, as well as some women, seated upon their packages. A boat was preparing to set off for Chuao. Though it was quite full, the boatman made a space for us. Thus began our sea voyage to Chuao. It was the season of violent sea-winds; the sea crashed against the base of the cliffs, forming great waves of water which washed back from the land in the boat. The other passengers drank rum and laughed, whilst the academics cowered, and blue jeans were soaked with the sea water as it swept the sides of the boat with every wave. As the mountain of Choroni faded into the distance, the spectacle of sea crashing against vertical wall of coastline heightened the awareness of danger. A fifty year old man related how he had been born in Chuao but now lived in Maracay and that it had been three years since he had last visited his family. He pointed out different spots on the coast, Playa Grande, Valle Seco, and, at last, as a round a mountain curve the boat entered a large bay, fringed by sand and palm trees and ringed by mountains. Seen there was the mouth of a river, a small house on a cliff, fishing nets laid out on a small dock, a tavern and a sign that read: Chuao . The journey had ended.

There were many men on the beach, looking out towards the sea. Some drank beer, others were in their boats, perhaps preparing to set out to fish. A battered old truck waited to take the people up to the town, five kilometres from the beach. At the town entrance, two dusty streets formed a fork in the road. On the right, lay small houses of cane and adobe, a plaza filled with trees and behind it a yard, full of cocoa. Two women, one very young and the other old, with white handkerchiefs on their heads, swept the cocoa into piles, rocking with their brooms as they worked. The bells of a small white and blue church, announced the hour of the Angelus (6 pm) . The women

Plate 10



1. A street in Choroni. 1988



2. Choroni coast. 1989



. A morning in the Chuao Bay . 1989



Plate 12



1. Yolanda Almenar standing on the Cross of May of the fishermen, Chuao beach . 1989



2. Natalia Ladera working on the beach preparing the fishes 'jurel' to be salted. 1989

interrupted their work and approached . They were Isabel Bolívar and Eddy Liendo, who led the group to the house where they were to stay, the Casa del Alto, a two-storey construction, located at one end of the cocoa yard, bordering the church on one side. On the ground floor, machines spoke of work which had stopped; above was a scantily furnished space, worn out by the years and lack of use. Many old boards creaked below their feet and some old Singer sewing machines gathered dust in a corner. A terrace allowed one look out over the town, the cocoa yard, the cross of Calvary; an old quenep tree offered its abundant fruit.

Later in the afternoon, the friendly acquaintance from the boat, Sixto Franco, (who turned out to belong to one of the most respected families of the town), showed the inquiring strangers around the community and introduced them to the people. There, in one of the streets, at the entrance to Cándida Bacalao's house, sat an old woman with penetrating eyes, she was at the time, second captain of the Saint John the Baptist Society and knowledgeable in the arts of medicinal herbs. She was introduced as María Tecla Herrera, one of Chuao's most prominent women, guardian of the doctrine, midwife, wise in the life and legends of Chuao, and someone who over the years has become a friend. José Rivas was there, an old man who had been captain of the Corpus Christi festivities for over twenty years. They along with Vicente Mijares, Cándida's companion, captain of St. John the Baptist, and Sixto Franco joined the conversation.

Doña Catalina and her plantation

On the following day Pulido Ladera and Pilar Franco, a friendly old couple, talked about the historical owner of the Chuao plantation. Through their words one was able to visualise Doña Catalina Mexía de Liendo (4) taking care of her slaves.

"About Doña Catalina, the only thing I know is that they tell us there are some documents there buried near the Cross of Forgiveness,(5) because they say that Doña Catalina, when this bay belonged to her, had her blacks here in Chuao, and she didn't pay them any money, but would send for them their food-ration give each one his supplies. Isn't that right, Pilar? And, according to what the elders told us, when she died she left money, there (pointing to the Cross of Forgiveness) and documents. And those are sayings of our old people. She left documents at the Cross of Forgiveness, and it's all there, all those documents of the plantation and all that stuff is

Plate 13



.. The Cross of Forgiveness. 1984

buried there. When Pérez Jiménez (Venezuelan Dictator 1948-58) was here, he wanted to take it out, but in the end he didn't. Some people said that people from Pérez Jiménez bought Chuao, but it's not true, because Chuao does not belong to anybody, it belongs to the blacks of Chuao. Doña Catalina gave Chuao to her blacks."(1980) (6).

As can be seen, the stability of the group, its sense of being rooted, has its origins in the security they feel at the protection afforded them by Doña Catalina. Pulido Ladera words directed to this earlier period of Chuao's history, then one started to look for more historical information.

In 1568, in an assignment or *encomienda* conceded by Diego de Losada (7) to a certain Justo Desqué,(a Spanish conqueror) the Indians of Chuao are mentioned. By 1591, a more specific reference can be found concerning the *encomienda* of the valleys of Chuao and Zepecurinare (today Cepe), granted previously to Juan Desqué, who had died without known heirs. For this reason, Diego de Osorio, Governor and Captain General of Venezuela, granted the *encomienda* of the Chuao and Zepecurinare Indians to Cristóbal Mexía de Avila.(8)

In 1633, this estate passed into the hands of the only daughter and sole heir of Don Cristóbal Mexía de Avila, Doña Catalina Mexía del Castillo, married in first nuptials to Pedro de Liendo.(9) In 1634, the number of Indians assigned was 48 (10). In 1649, Don Pedro de Liendo asked for a demarcation of his lands, for which purpose a delegate of the governor arrived. This official addressed the Indians, through the person whose stated function was principal (the leader) and had several natives in his charge, in order to divide the land between them and Pedro Liendo. (11) After the division of land the Indians lived in *Pueblo Quemado* . The history of Chuao (as we have gathered it from the townspeople) recounts that the first group of people lived in what is today called La Chivera (a place for goats), which is located on the river bank next to the beach. This town was subsequently destroyed and abandoned. (12) In the remainder of the document, the Indians are expressly prohibited from using lands which are not within the established limits.

It was in this apparently protectionist manner that dominion of the lands was established, and thus was laid the basis for the formation of the Chuao plantation, which, as an enterprise engaged in export, belonged to the patrimony of an important family group, and has been in existence from the first decades of the 17th Century. However it is safe to affirm that this plantation originated towards

the end of the 16th Century, when in the Valley of Chuao the communal land holding of the indigenous group coexisted with the individual possession of land. In accordance with the demarcation of boundaries carried out in 1649, the lands adjudicated to Pedro de Liendo, in his condition as husband of Catalina Mexía, extended from the beach, as one enters from the sea, until the limits of the area where the homes and the farm lands of the Indians were found, with the river as the limiting boundary. This demarcation, with later incorporations, is what constituted the Chuao Plantation during the colonial period. "The Indians' lands disappeared, incorporated into the plantation on the basis of successive occupations, and legalised by ulterior compositions, or judicial instruments which granted the right of absolute property of the Valley of Chuao to a family group, who shared this right with the Church from the year 1671." (13) This affirmation can be corroborated when documents later than 1671 are examined, where no mention is made of the Indians of Chuao, nor of their lands. There were few Indians when Pedro Liendo arrived there, and their disappearance can be explained in two ways: firstly in the process of intermarriage, which was a common and well-documented feature of Venezuelan colonial times, and secondly in elimination by the maroon slaves. María Tecla Herrera offered us this latter explanation. The first explanation seems to be the more likely (María Tecla herself is a good example of the blending of the Indian and black blood.) In any case, the fact that they disappeared as a group from very early times can be corroborated in the document N° 95, **Obra Pía de Chuao**, in which Bishop Mariano Martí, (14) who in a pastoral visit reached Chuao in December 1772, mentions an Indian settlement "...that had existed in the past." (15)

The 1659 inventory reflects the characteristics of a 17th Century Venezuelan plantation. The area under cultivation in modern measurements was approximately 80 hectares, excluding the small plantations and tree cultivated for slaves, their family vegetable plots, or the arable land of the Indians, and there were 40,658 cocoa trees. By 1671 the *Valle Seco* ("Dry Valley") plantation, which according to the 1649 document belonged to the Indians, was considered as part of the Chuao plantation: this 17th Century plantation boasted an irrigation system. (16) Document N° 14, the 1659 inventory of Pedro Liendo's assets, names the first contingent of Black slaves in Chuao. (17)

In the second half of the 17th Century, the number of labourers in the Valley of Chuao and Zepecurinare rose to 150 people, including African slaves and Indians of the *encomienda*. At that time the whites who lived in Chuao were the administrators; the rest were slaves. Keeping in mind that, at least in theory, the Spanish Laws of the Indies protected the Indians, in that they prohibited their utilisation as workers in the cocoa plantation, and that, moreover, the Indians tended to die out or intermarry with black slaves, one can easily see how the African slaves and their descendants came to be the dominant productive force of the area. The important point, however, is that from these early times the Chuao plantation can accurately be considered an enterprise whose regime was one of slave labour.

An important event of this same year of 1671 is the ratification by Doña Catalina Mexía de Avila of her testament of 1669, in which one finds clauses which protect her slaves.(see note 4)) Doña Catalina died in September 1671 and the Valley of Chuao became an *Obra Pía*, as she had laid down in her will.

Problems and unrest

The documents describe the 18th Century as a period of great unrest and problems. Natural disasters occurred such as the grave floods that ravaged the plantation in 1742. (18)

Moreover, during this period the *Obra Pía* faced problems with the slaves:the report made by Francisco de Vega in 1773 contains information about the bad treatment of slaves which caused them to run away.(19) *Cimarrones*, as slaves who had run away from the plantation were called, were continually trying to persuade the other slaves to flee. (20)

In the same report, Don Francisco writes of the intensive illegal cocoa traffic going on between slaves and Dutchmen coming from Curazao, which also cause damage to the plantation. (21) It became practically impossible for the administrators to control this illicit commerce. Many times, the overseers themselves participated in the business and thus would not denounce it. (22) There are also accounts of the privateering of the Dutch in the Caribbean and among the much documented evidence of assaults by pirates.

In an attempt to control rebellious movements among the slaves, many were punished and expelled from the plantation. This illustrated the cruel treatment suffered by the black slaves. (23)



1. The Church of Chuao, in the background the Casa del Alto. 1980



2. Women drying the cocoa in the churchyard. 1980

Moreover, there is documentary evidence of widespread venereal disease among the slaves and lack of medical care.

During the 18th Century, writs of emancipation were granted, but the slaves were not set free; rather, the writs became another form of exploitation. It was almost impossible to find work outside the plantations, so the Administrator of the plantation would make an agreement with them, in which they continued working there as free people, for a small amount of money. The Patronage did not supply any kind of help when they became ill or had other needs. For the Landlords the system of manumission was very convenient, because they kept their workers but at no expense.

Many documents of sedition and banishment were issued during these years, and the turmoil led the Patrons of the plantation of the Valley of Chuao to proclaim in document N° 78, 1767, the following slave laws:

- Free-slaves were forbidden to live in Chuao
- Slaves were to be subdued, with moderation, if possible, and if not, by force
- The two exits from Chuao (the sea and Turmero path) were to be guarded.
- The cultivation of cocoa by slaves was not permitted. All cocoa which was diverted and found was to be seized.
- Houses separate from the group of the slave holding were to be demolished.
- Slaves were prohibited from leaving the holding without authorisation.
- The sale of liquor to slaves was forbidden.
- The production of liquor in slave houses was forbidden.
- Slaves were prohibited from leaving their houses from sundown until sunrise.
- Slave houses were required to have only one door and grills over the windows. (The other doors were to be closed forever.)
- Slaves were to be guarded, so that they would go from their work on the plantation to that of their own plots: in this way they were not idle, and were self-supporting; with the sale of their produce they earned money to pay for their clothes.
- Heads of households were to be assigned lands for the family plot of farming land, and would be permitted to plant only some banana plants, but no cocoa. (In 1768, the masters of Chuao prohibited the planting of cocoa outside the plantation, eliminating

the small groves of cocoa trees cultivated personally by the slaves.
) (24)

- No animals were to be kept, because they harmed the plantation

- Slaves were not permitted to have lances, daggers, etc.

- Concubinage of slaves and 'bad habits' were to be severely punished because they were abominable sins. (Marriages were allowed, although they were not very common.)

- The *Obra Pía* would care for the children and the ill as it had done up that time, using for this the profits obtained by the overseers through the sale of bananas.

- Every month a slave would be dispatched as messenger to Caracas, with a letter describing all of recent events. (25)

The rest of the 18th century documents report different events, such as, epidemics, deterioration of the plantation, interference of the Spanish monarchy because of the bad administration of the church patronage, and the clerics reaction to it.

During the 19th Century, the problems of the preceding century continued. Various documents for the year 1804 point out the drop in the price of cocoa. The lists of sick slaves grew longer.

By 1808, in the census of slaves of Chuao, 62 houses and 300 slaves were registered. of whom 150 worked, and the rest were 'unserviceable'. Such a description reveals two facts: the extent to which they were considered as objects by the landlords of Chuao, and at the same time the fear the landlords had of possible rebelliousness. The landlords imposed a series of measures to maintain control of the slaves, such as the houses having to have only a small window, with iron bars, and only one door, (as mentioned above, in the document N°78, 1767). It is relevant to point this out, because today the majority of the people of Chuao still build their houses following this traditional model derived from slavery.

The changes in the administration of Chuao, during the next few years mirrored the instability of the whole country, which was a result of the repercussions of the French invasion of Spain. The *criollos* took advantage of the European conflicts and declared their loyalty to Fernando VII, and started to prepare a revolt against the Spanish Crown. To add to these problems, in 1812, the earthquake that ravaged Caracas also caused great damage in Chuao. The year 1814 was one of the most disastrous for the Venezuelan patriots and

the tragedy and desolation of the country can be summed up in the record of the ruinous state of the Chuao plantation. Esteban Escobar, administrator during 1814, states: "...due to the lack of tools, a great portion of the slaves do not work during the day... [the slave contingent is] composed of three hundred and nineteen persons, what a shame is the nakedness in which they are found". (26) (

Moreover, in the search by both sides for sources of finance the plantations suffered greatly from the Spaniards, who again controlled the country, and needed funds to continue the war. Thus the conditions of Chuao deteriorated and the condition of its slaves worsened considerably. The Chuao plantation was at the mercy of political fluctuations and no one wanted to go to Chuao due to several revolts of slaves.(27)

More rules and regulations

In Document N° 158 , 1817, regulations were set up: payment for work, rules governing the *repartimiento* (note 8, Chuao: Some Historical Data) and good order among the slaves, with the express purpose of doing away with 'the evil' that had been introduced into the plantation. In this document, the plantation was converted into a sort of prison, where everything was subject to rules and regulations: prayers, hours of work, time to eat, time to sleep. There, differences were established between a pregnant married woman and one who was pregnant and unmarried: the former had some privileges, the latter had none. Slaves could neither do business with the "suitcase-carriers" travelling salesmen who would come around - nor with the boats which would approach the coast. It was prohibited that free slaves from Chuao or slaves from other plantations should live there. The overseer and his assistants did not permit the slaves to drink alcohol and they had to forbid the entry of any drink into Chuao to eradicate this habit. Punishments were established for disobeying the rules. The *Obra Pia* was bound to supply them with meat and clothing, this last item once a year.(28)

Norms and regulations continue to be established throughout Documents N° 158, 1817, and 159, 1818. Apparently, those formed part of a plan for a project to promote and improve the Chuao plantation. Obligations for overseers were established: they were to employ the slaves efficiently, so that the slaves could take advantage of their free time to work in their own plots. This was to be possible even on Saturdays, so that all should have enough food for their

sustenance. Those who did not do this would be punished. Overseers were introduced to "...avoid the frauds perpetrated by the *mandadores* (*mandador*: a slave put in charge of others) in their tasks, in their nepotism and in the way they formed the relationship of *compadrazgo* (being a godfather) and other "reprehensible connections, because frequently they assign less work to their favourites or they separate them from the others, so that they can go off to fish or hunt". (29) The document also contains instructions for the care of the plants, to avoid the appearance of worms: the method for planting cocoa is established, (in single file, with a specific distance between plants); the planting of bucare trees (in alternate rows, to protect and give shade to the cocoa trees) is required. Many recommendations are given for the adequate conservation of the plantation: where seeds should be stored, what to do with old fruit trees, what types of bucares to plant, how to keep the land always free of weeds, how irrigation should not be neglected, and so on. All these are obligations of the overseers.(30)

The regulations also indicate the use of the fat from slaughtered cattle, as well as coconut shells as fuel for lamps. They continue to establish severe punishments for the theft of cocoa even when the culprit of a theft is not discovered, Saturdays will be made a working day for all slaves, including the oldest among them. Slaves are forbidden to fish on working days, and only the most responsible will be allowed to do so. The regulations also require vigilance over the canoes and boats coming to the beach with the intention of buying produce from the slaves, who will only be allowed to sell bananas, corn, cassava or any other product of their plots, with the explicit permission of the principal overseer, who will send his seconds to watch over the transactions on the beach. Another group of rules are set down, among them: "Strictly and duly it is hereby prohibited that there be neither freemen nor slaves from other plantations living in the Chuao plantation; any such that there be found will be immediately taken prisoner without admitting excuse or pretext; the overseer should be very watchful as to the exact fulfilment of this order." (31) Also in that document, rules are established as to how houses should be built so as to control the slaves. (32)

The role of the University of Caracas

In 1827, the University of Caracas, the present Central University of Venezuela, and by decree of the Liberator, Simón Bolívar was awarded the profits from the Chuao Plantation. (33) Previously the profit from the plantation had been in the hands of the Patrons of The *Obra Pía*, thus the Church received the main income of Chuao.

The most constant and stable income received by the University was that of the *Obra Pía* of Chuao. In 1835, the prosperous state of the University of Caracas enabled it to lend money to the government. This abundance was attributed to the direct administration of the University's most important possession: the Chuao plantation.

In 1855, the University of Caracas signed a contract with Manuel Antonio Matos, (one of the men of President Guzmán Blanco) to whom the Chuao plantation was rented for 15 years, after which period, the rental agreement was to be extended for 12 more years. During the years 1871-72, the University obtained substantial income from the plantation, which enabled it to balance its budget and obtain credit for repairing a building. In 1879 the President at that time, Antonio Guzmán Blanco, rescinded this extension of rental and put the plantation again in the hands of the University, under his direct administration. (34)

The fall of coffee and cocoa prices at the end of the 19th century, and bad administration (from within and without the University) caused the decline of prosperity in the following years. For this reason, the University had to rent the plantation to the government. In 1883, the University was forced to sell off some of its properties by public auction; by 1886, the government forced the University to sell the properties it had still kept. The Chuao Plantation was sold to Antonio Medina for 750.000 bolívares. He was no more than a figurehead for the president, Antonio Guzmán Blanco. As of 1883, the University's sources of independent income were eliminated, as all educational institutions were made part of public education. The economic dependence of the University on the State became absolute. Chuao became the property of the national government.

The abolition of slavery

In 1854, slavery was abolished in Venezuela, during the presidency of José Gregorio Monagas. Simón Bolívar had decreed abolition in 1815, and ratified the measure in 1819, but it only became a legal reality almost forty years later, in 1854. One of the reasons for the delay was the resistance of the landowners to the liberation of their slaves, and Bolívar could not force them. After Independence the economic and political power laid in the landowner's hands and they did not want to abolish slavery. However, by the time a liberal government came to power, it was decreed and finally accepted.(35)

Government actions and attitudes

Accounts of the different governments which Venezuela had from the time of Guzmán Blanco up to the present, form a part of the oral history of the town.

The thirty-year dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez (1905-1935) comes to life through the stories of Pulido Ladera, which tell of a time of terror, of murders, of poisonings. According to oral accounts, Simón Sosa, who was administrator of the plantation in Gomez's time killed Olavarria Matos, in the *Casa del Alto* , (Administrator's house, beside the church). But some years later, Sosa was poisoned by another politician who exerted his power in Choroni. (36) Moreover, among the tales of the Gómez era, were those relating the problems faced by the common people in their resistance to the *recluta* (military recruitment). The *recluta* was so bad that young men tried to avoid it, but in general they were not successful. (37)

However, paradoxically, this time was one of the best people remembered in relation to the production of cocoa and the maintenance of the town. (38) In 1918 the type of cocoa in Chuao was changed, and the church was also roofed, as María Tecla remembered. (39) She linked her confirmation with the visit of the Bishop to Chuao and to the time when Vicente Gallardo, was the administrator. After Gómez's death the houses of those involved in Gomez's administration were ransacked by people of Chuao, as is mentioned in the oral tradition. (40) No special memories of the time between the end of Gómez' era (1935) and the beginning of the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1948 have been recorded in Chuao.

Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1948-58) has also remained in the oral history of Chuao, for as we shall see in the accounts collected, he was the only president who actually went there. As regards so important

and notorious an individual, different points of view can be found among the townspeople. Some of Chuao's people lived in Caracas and worked in the homes of supporters of the regime, and were treated well; this experience had a moderating influence on their opinion of the dictator. What the town never accepted were the expropriations which the government made of portions of their lands during this ten-year period. (41)

During the time of Pérez Jiménez's dictatorship, the government thought of developing tourist facilities in the area. The person in charge of gathering information about the project was Fortunato Herrera, who was nicknamed "The Platinum Blond" . He committed a series of injustices in Chuao; for instance, he expropriated the meadows, in which the Chuao townspeople had planted crops, and paid them a pittance for these farm lands.

Disorder and ransacking took place in Chuao when Pérez Jiménez was overthrown in 1958. (42) In *Pueblo Quemado* (see note 12) during the dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez, the Colmenares family, who were in charge of the plantation, and in accordance with Perez Jiménez's mandate, set up a pig-raising establishment, with many modern conveniences. This was an attempt to begin industrialised production. When the dictator fell, the people of Chuao ransacked this place, for it represented the power of this man and thus was a symbol of the oppression and abuses they had suffered under the dictator and his henchmen. The place was abandoned for a long time. Today some families live there, but all of the installations for the production of hogs were abandoned and have never been used since. Now it is the town garbage dump.

Furthermore, according to the townspeople, Pérez Jiménez tried to remove the Cross of Forgiveness, in an attempt to find the documents attesting to the ownership of the plantation, which supposedly had been buried there by Doña Catalina. However, the dictator was unable to accomplish this, because he was overthrown and had to leave the country. It is in this way that the people of Chuao attribute the fall of the dictator to his coming to Chuao and his desire to move the people off their lands, since they consider themselves to be proprietors of the place, by disposition of Doña Catalina.(see note 4)

After the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez in 1958, a provisional government took over, and set up a preliminary frameworks for the elections which brought democracy to Venezuela, from 1959 until

the present. This is much more recent history, still not assimilated by the passing of time, but it has nevertheless left its imprint on the town of Chuao.

Before democracy came to power recalled Augusta Chávez:
"Chuao was very beautiful: the square surrounding the Cross of Forgiveness was full of ancient trees, *almendrones* and *arrayanes*. All the houses had roofing tiles, white walls and small gardens in the front full of flowers. Most of them are no longer be found. The streets were very clean because everybody took care of them. That type of caring was the heritage of the Simon Sosa administration, because he loved Chuao very much, and told people the way he wanted to see Chuao. For example, for the festivity of the Virgin, the Patron Saint of Chuao on the 8th of December everybody was required to paint the front of their houses and carry out repairs. But during the presidency of Leoni (1964-69), all the houses were destroyed in the rebuilding of the town of Chuao. The government ordered the ancient trees to be cut down and made a new square with benches and cement. A group of workers came and planted some acacia trees and took away all the roofs of the houses, replacing the tile with a material called *tejalit*, which is very ugly. They also wanted to demolish the church, but an Italian priest, who was at that time in charge of the religious life of Chuao, went to Caracas and talked with the Archbishop and other important people, defending the right of Chuao to have their humble colonial style Church. In the end it was not destroyed." (Augusta, 1989)

Since the advent of democracy, Chuao appears to have been controlled by the National Agrarian Institute, and the price of the cocoa by the National Cocoa Funds. Legal imprecisions persist as to the rightful ownership of the plantation, but since at present the agricultural produce does not represent a sizable amount of money, nobody has taken the trouble to clear up this problem. The legal imprecisions exist due to the abuse of power of the different governments of Venezuela. Since the Guzmán Blanco epoch the plantation has been sold several times. It has been passed from hand to hand since the end of the nineteenth century.

It is very interesting to note that up to the present day only Chuao people, and they alone, are allowed to build on the plantation or own houses. Some years ago, in the sixties, a Chuao fisherman, who lives in Choroní sold one of his houses in Chuao to a Colombian woman, and the community became very upset. From that moment

they introduced severe restrictions: nobody can now sell houses without the approval of the community.

Nowadays the plantation is administered by a group of men of Chuao. This group is chosen by the Mayor of Maracay, and changes depend upon the movements of the parties in control of Venezuela. For example, at this moment *Acción Democrática* is in power and the group of men who manage the plantation belong to the same political party. The problem is that they do not have specific expertise in cocoa production nor any guidance from the Agrarian Institute towards the improvement of production or management of the plantation. Thus they operate in a primitive way, which is not the most profitable one.

According to Augusta: "The last damage to Chuao occurred three years ago when the government decided to renovate the square. They convinced some leaders of the town that it should be done, then they cut down the rest of the trees. The Simón Bolívar statue, and now the Cross of Forgiveness are in a place, without shade and breeze." (1989)

The Chuao people were very worried during 1989, because the government sent some German engineers to study the possibility of providing water to other towns of the Central Coast, using the Chuao reservoir. It was considered a big problem because without water the plantation, the town and the people of Chuao would disappear. Francisco Planchez and other leaders of the community such as Néstor Liendo, Pedro Sosa, Jesús Franco and the Society of Corpus Christi, supported by some lecturers of the Central University, started a campaign against this project. Chuao also received strong support from the other Corpus Christi Societies, such as Yare, Turiamo, Naiguatá, Tinaquillo. The media were helpful in publishing the information and the points of view of these people. In the end the project was cancelled. This was more to do with the present economic situation in Venezuela than rational arguments. It is important to note that the people of Chuao have their own views on this cancellation of the plans for water supplies, and think that is the result of the protection of Doña Catalina (43)

In June 1989, before the festival of Corpus Christi, María Tecla was talking about Chuao, and as is common with old people she was remembering the past. Other memories have dealt with the positive work of Governor Cheito Casanova, (already mentioned at the beginning), who took care of the people of Chuao. They are very

grateful to him, and many of them, like herself, have a picture of him in their houses.

"So, Chuao had a real life when I was young. Nowadays we only have memories of the former plantation: the heart lives on but the body is gone." (María Tecla, 1989)

Notes

1. Arcila Fariás, Eduardo. **Economía colonial de Venezuela**, p. 89.
2. Illegal trade with Holland. "The slaves waited for the occasion when they could take cocoa out to the Dutch, who, they say, pass continuously up and down [the coast]...Recently a Dutchman arrived at Zepe to take on water, and it seems that it is the custom that whenever they come, they give the commander of those corsairs a bottle of rum as a present, which I find very ugly..." (Doc. 104, p. 366) "...a slave has just been apprehended, of the ones your Lordship has in this *Obra Pía*, called Juan Inocencio, on the road to Valle Seco, who was coming from Curazao on a Dutch schooner...I am keeping him shackles and in the stocks until your Lordship makes a decision, I am giving you word of this for your intelligence..." (Doc. 93, p. 349) "I have to pay: "12 pesos paid to Don Martín de Galimenea for the cost of 24 fanegas* (fanega: a measure of cocoa equal to about 116 pounds), belonging to the *Obra Pía*, taken from him by the Dutch, as he was coming towards La Guaira and going on to the island of Curazao." (Doc. Nº 68, p.306).
3. Juan Vicente Gomez. (1859-1935).Venezuelan Dictator from 1908 until his death.
4. Catalina Mexía de Avila is known in Chuao as Catalina de Liendo, because of her first husband Pedro Liendo, who took care of the plantation until he died. She disposed in her will the following: "I declare as my assets a cocoa plantation in the Valley of Chuao with all the valley, and in it 46,000 cocoa trees...I declare that I have in said plantation around 150 slaves. Item 38: It is my will that the aforesaid cocoa tree plantation that I have in the Valley of

Chuaao with all the slaves I have for its benefit...shall not be sold, but rather be conserved for the *Obra Pia* that I plan to make and found on my aforesaid cocoa plantation and slaves." Item 41. **"First I desire and it is my will that the plantation and cocoa tree grove which I have and possess in the Valley of Chuaao, and down the sea coast, with the black slaves that I have for its benefit on it, shall not be sold or given away in any way, but shall remain it in perpetuity."** (Doc. 15, p. 200)

5. The Cross of Forgiveness . It is a cross placed, outside the churchyard, in the left hand side facing the Royal Street and the Bolivar square. In slavery time, when a slave, was prosecuted for any reason, and he or she managed to go to the Cross of Forgiveness and knelt down in front of it, could not be punished, and had to be forgiven. Today, the Cross of Forgiveness continues being a symbol of protection of the community and plays a relevant role in Corpus Christi festivity.
6. Pulido Ladera and Pilar Franco. Interview, 1980, Folder, Nº 5.
7. Diego de Losada. Spanish conqueror. (1513-1569). He founded the city of Caracas in 1567.
8. "Since you, Cristóbal Mexia de Avila, neighbour of this city of Santiago de León [Caracas] are one of the persons who have served our King well and loyally. and that you are married and so you can better sustain yourself, thus I find it well to grant you, an *encomienda* and *repartimiento* (Allotment of lands granted by Spaniards on the conquest of America to the native Indian), with all the Indians that live in the valleys of Chuaao and Cepecurinare. These Indians I grant and assign to you, with all their lands, waters, fisheries, and hunting areas, in whatever form and manner as they have from their antiquity..." (**La Obra Pia de Chuaao**, Document 2, p. 180.)
9. She married three times, her last husband survived her.
10. **Op. cit.**, Document 6, p.184
11. "...to indicate to them lands enough in which they can have adequate comfort and which they can maintain in their possession, because this is the command of His Majesty, their houses and lands they wish to have as their ancestors have had, for their living and the houses for their families...And that for their tilling and raising of animals they have chosen the lands which

follow, coming from the sea, up the valley, from the river up to the high land which falls towards the Choroni Valley, down the sea coast, and on the right hand going up the river until arriving at the first pass over said river, which flows at the foot of a large and high hill. In these lands they have their cultivated plots and tillings, some groves of old cocoa trees, and some new trees which they have planted and which their ancestors planted. These lands, because they are good and fertile, their ancestors have tilled, choosing them, and they till them now and they choose them for their lands..."(Op. cit, Document 12, p. 190)

12. In document N° 52, 1751, of the Arquidiocesan Archives appears the order given by Lieutenant General Ricardo to the *Guipuzcoana* Company . This order was : "to destroy a town in the valley of Chuao, formed by huts whose inhabitants are undesirable people, such as delinquents, fugitives, and others who live in concubinage and in drunkenness." This document also mentioned "a church made of straw almost in ruins."(first page of the document). This settlement of Chuao was totally destroyed, and was called until today *Pueblo Quemado* (Burnt Town). Nearby is the cemetery of Chuao, and outside the sanctified burial grounds, there is a place where all who died of the plague were buried. This happened at the beginning of the 20th century, so for quite some time no one went there, until the time of the dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez. (María Tecla, 1980)
13. Brito Figueroa, **El problema tierra y esclavos en la historia de Venezuela**, p. 97
14. **Mariano Martí** . Spanish priest. (1721-1792). He was sent to America, first of all as Bishop of Puerto Rico and was later sent to Venezuela as Bishop of Caracas in 1770. He travelled for 13 years around the province of Venezuela. He wrote a relevant book : **Relación de la visita general que en la diócesis de Caracas hizo (1771-1784)**
15. There was an ancient Indian settlement, which was destroyed and the church burnt. (See note 12). **Obra Pía de Chuao**, p. 352
16. The irrigation system was safeguarded from the sea by a wall of rough stone and mortar seventy varas (measure of length, about 33 inches) long, two-thirds of a vara wide, and as much in height" (Doc. 13,p..)
17. **Op. cit.** p. 191-193 . Due to the importance of the slaves , a discussion about their origins is given in pages 55 onwards.

18. "The river changed its course for about four miles, due to the great flood there was in the month of January of this present year of 1742; as was also the case around the month of June of the aforesaid year of 1742, which caused notable damage, since it not only cut off from the river the principal canal but it also took a portion of the trees of those already counted..." (Document 54, p. 268). In 1796 the administrator, Andrés de Ibarra, gives an account of the floods suffered by Chuao: "Another eventuality has occurred besides, that the extraordinary rains experienced at the end of last month in this city, with not a few ravages, were very much more copious and lamentable in the Valley of Chuao. It rained furiously here for the space of three continuous days, a period which caused the water of the river (which on its own is quite torrential and very rapid) so to rise that the inhabitants were forced to abandon the place, sheltering in the church, which is the highest spot. Nevertheless, they were immersed in the water up to the waist. The plantation, which on all sides is encircled by the river, was converted into an ocean, and the velocity of the currents tore out the cocoa trees by the roots. Even the bucares (bucare: Venezuelan shade tree) disappeared, leaving only for memory's sake some sad remains, for thus should be called the small number which have been saved, with respect to the total which existed in the plantation before. Even these same relics have been left in many parts, trapped among great quantities of brush and weeds, thrown down by the currents or surrounded by the trapped waters, destroyed or in some way damaged and deprived for now of the benefits of irrigation, since the currents demolished all the waterways and canals, with the many and costly stone and mortar walls that had been built to pass the waters from one part to another..." (*Op. cit.* Doc. Nº 129, p. 438-439)

19. These runaways formed the *cumbes* , or runaway slave settlements, of Venezuela, in a phenomenon similar to that observed in other countries. In Colombia, for example, such settlements were called *palenques* , as they were also known in Mexico and Cuba. In Brazil, they were known as *quilombos*, *mocambos*, *ladetras* or *mambises*. In the Caribbean, the Guyanas and regions of what is now the Southern United States, runaways were called maroons. These maroon settlements in Venezuela were successful . "In 1720, for example, it was estimated that in Venezuela alone were at least 20.000 runaway scattered in *cumbes* throughout the colony. "(Bowse Federico, *op.cit.*,p. 375) But when the Independence War started, however the majority of these maroons joined either the Spanish or the Patriot cause. It is quite understandable that at first most of them fought against the Patriots, rather than the Spanish Crown, which meant nothing to most of them. The leaders of

the Independence Movement were mostly the criollos mantuanos, the landlords of the plantations, who therefore represented to the maroons and mulattos the enemy. After the death of a popular Spanish chief José Tomás Boves, in 1814, a strong patriot leader José Antonio Páez emerged. He replaced Boves as a leader of the masses of the Llano (the central part of Venezuela), and convinced the dispersed peoples to fight with Bolívar, in favour of Independence. The maroon towns in Venezuela were incorporated with the rest of Venezuela after the War of Independence. We must not forget that the first defender of slaves was Simón Bolívar who had declared their freedom from the beginning of the war. Therefore it is not possible to speak in Venezuela about a particular maroon culture totally isolated from the rest of the country.

20. "I believe that slaves useful for work in such a large plantation have committed no other crime but that of having run away because of fear due to the bad way in which they were treated. I feel that these [the runaways] should be pardoned by means of an amnesty dispatched by your Lordship and in this way, I have no doubt, all of them would come down...In the hills, there are thirteen men and seven women, all useful for work, who if not pardoned or taken, will be twenty enemies of the plantation." (**Op. cit.**, Doc. 104,p. 367)

21. "The first time I went down to the beach I found a small fishing boat which had not left there for eight days. I asked the fisherman to whom he sold what he fished, and he told me to the slaves of this [plantation]; from his answers, I have no doubt, he came to pick up any little bit of cocoa which the slaves would take to him whenever they could.(**Op. cit.**, Doc. 104,p.366)

22. **Op. cit.** Doc. N° 104,p.368

23. Regarding the abuses that the Patronage committed within the *Obra Pía*, we can cite the cases of Felipe and Julian Cayetano , who were expelled from The Province of Venezuela : "That from Felipe Santiago and Julián Cayetano, 25 pesos must be taken from the value of each one's plantation...to pay for the 50 pesos of extraordinary expense that they caused by their insolence and disobedience when they were taken by the Corsican of the *Gutpuzcoana* Company*...If any one of these slaves use any of their money [in order to buy]...their freedom, none of them will be able to set up their habitation in the valleys of Aragua, or the valley of Choroní, nor in any of the areas immediate to Chuao, where they can make money by stealing the fruit of that plantation, an activity to which they are accustomed. These they can also receive what the other slaves steal, or pervert them with their bad counsel, by virtue of their

having been leaders of disobedience and of their having had as subordinates all the said slaves, who are used to obeying them and following their malign influences. This is in violation of their condition, so important and necessary for the subsistence of the *Obra Pía*. From now on we nullify such grace as we have given them as undue and iniquitous. If slaves so perverse, vicious and leaders of rebellions ...were to move to the valleys of Aragua and Choroni and other areas immediate to Chuao...let the *Obra Pía* and its patronage [masters] have the right to retake such slaves, and make use of them selling them or shipping them to Veracruz or any other place. In this way they will understand the good we are doing them and the conditions which we have agreed upon. This agreement will be read to all of them...let your Lordship command that any slaves who free themselves be notified of the contents of this document, for the security of the *Obra Pía*, in fulfilment of our obligations and the security of our consciences...: (**Op. cit.** Doc. N° 98, p. 359-60).

In document N° 104 appears: " To protect the economy of the Chuao plantation, which has suffered great damage, the Captain General of the Province of Venezuela declares that the black Julián Cayetano and his woman Juana Inés are expelled for ever from this Province . They have to be sent to Veracruz. The blacks Julian Cayetano and his woman are aware that, if for any reason they come back to Venezuela, they will be sentenced to life imprisonment". (p.388). In the end Julián Cayetano and his woman were sent to Veracruz with other slaves, where they were sold again, and obviously never came back to Venezuela. The important point is that they were already freed slaves by the time of their imprisonment. The Patronage used its power to capture and condemn them without regards to their right. They also took the belongings of the couple, which consisted of : " A very thin horse, a mare in the same condition as the horse,some men and women's old clothes ." (**Op. cit.** Doc. N° 98, p. 384)

Thus an underground war began among the groups, since the administrators of the *Obra Pía* paid for information about runaway slaves and their capture."Value of the capture of the black Domingo who escaped in Curazao, 120 reales. Given to some soldiers who went to La Guaira to secure Domingo and get the slave Salvador Miguel out of jail;18 reales...(**Op. cit.** Doc. N° 63,p.290).

24. **Op cit.** Doc. 82, p.337
25. **Op. cit.** Summary of the Doc. N° 78, pgs.. 325-332
26. **Op. cit.** Doc. 151. p. 507.

27. The following declaration is contained in documents N° 152 "...it was an established fact that no white person wanted to take charge of the various contingents of slaves, particularly the slaves of Chuao who were in revolt. There were a group of 27 rebel blacks armed with lances who were capable of seducing and arming the rest of slaves, and about twenty other slaves in the hills, armed with lances, many of them naked and sick. It was necessary for me to send troops in order to contain the unrest. Upon my appointment at the plantation I dispatched eight soldiers to search and capture all fugitive slaves, this was successfully carried out. I transferred the sick slaves to the town of Choroni, where they were attend to by a doctor . When the slaves health improved I transported them with the white overseers to *Obra Pia*. The overseers objectives were to contain and punish those slaves who did not observe orders and work. This was successfully accomplished. (**Op. cit.** Doc. 152,p. 537) ✓
28. **Op. cit.** p.558
29. **Op.cit.** Item 6, p.553
30. The plantation was divided into three plantations, each one with its majordomo, a certain number of slaves and one general majordomo who had to look after all aspects of the plantation operation, e.g. the tools needed, the picking of fruits and the sick slaves. His duty was to inform the Administrator about the conditions of the plantation and present to him the expenses. The first plantation comprised the vegas (fertile plains) between *Andrés España* and *Madre de Dios*, which was the biggest because of the number of cocoa trees. The second comprised three vegas *La Concepción*, *San Antonio*, and *Soledad* , with a total of 30.000 cocoa trees and probably *Pueblo Quemado* , which could been planted with cocoa if a ditch had gone to it. The third should be with the passing of the years the biggest because it could have the vega of Tamaira , near Río del Medio and Duro , including the cocoa trees of St. Joseph. There would have been about 40.000 cocoa plants. It was also planned to extend the plantation up in the mountains through the path to Turnero town (Doc. 159, p.560) Nowadays the names of the division of the plantation still existed, but not more the organization, which was very important to improve the production of cocoa.
31. **Op. cit.** p. 553.

32. A wall should be built that forms a space sufficient to "...contain in its interior six or seven rows of *bahareque* (cane and adobe)houses roofed with tiles, divided in straight streets 4 or 5 "varas" wide (one vara = 33 inches).. One corridor and the rest of the space is to be divided in three to give room for sleeping , the males together, then the couple, and then the girls. It was also established that around 60 houses in a square space 100 varas wide should be built, with streets between the rows of houses, leaving a wide space around the whole compound for the outside wall . The cost of these buildings would be very cheap, because the slaves, including women and children, who could carry the soil to build the houses, could do the work (p.558).
33. Documents, Decrees 1826-27, Caracas: Sociedad Bolivariana, Volume 11, pp. 276, 327, 329.
34. As president of Venezuela, Antonio Guzmán Blanco dominated the political scene from 1870 until 1888. Today in Chuao one can hear about Don Bernardo Guzmán, one of the relatives of Guzmán Blanco. Don Bernardo was landlord of the plantation La Guayabita, which was next to the plantations Chuao and Paraíso . No one in Chuao liked him, according to oral tradition. María Tecla said: "I used to hear my mother say that he had come only once to Chuao, and that he had been stung by "pícatón", that he had gotten a fever and he had never come again." I asked what "pícatón" was. "A weed with thorns that grows around the plantation. It's stronger than anybody knows, well, it doesn't do anything to us; one scratches like a mosquito bite, and that's that." (María Tecla, 1980). One of the presidents of Venezuela after Guzmán Blanco was Joaquín Crespo , whose his wife was reputed to have dominated him. The memories of Misia Jacinta has remained in Chuao through some songs, such as the one hummed for us by María Tecla: "Misia Jacinta was seated in her big easy chair/and Mocho Hernández * arrived/and left her his shirt." (1980).* (a rebellious general, who tried several times to defeat the government. He was very popular and loved by people)
35. In Chuao, they learned the news through the words of a former slave, Germán Liendo, according to what was told us by Venancio Bolívar: "The elders told me that when they gained their liberty, the one who published it was José Gregorio Monagas, that Bolívar officially ended it, but slavery still continued. Then when José Gregorio Monagas rose to power, he granted freedom. There was a man named Germán, who was a fisherman. He came here and said there was liberty, that slavery was ended. Then those who commanded here wanted to take him prisoner, but the town rose up against the administrator. Then

Germán left again, and when he brought the official papers, everyone realised that freedom had indeed been bestowed. Whoever had a lot of cocoa over there by the *mango* tree of Andrés España, the one by the side of the road, left that pile of cocoa and everybody came into town. That is what they tell me, that it happened that way, when liberty was given. The freedom that this place has is from Germán Liendo; they should have put up a statue of him there. " And in the voice of Juana Chema" "He was smart, he went around in those little old fishing boats there used to be here, when they only had oars. They would go as far as La Gualra, as far as Puerto Cabello. He did not know how to read, but he was intelligent. He was the one who took the risk of saying that they were already free, the others were afraid but he came here in this clever way . Once he said, take me immediately to my town, Chuao, because I'm going to die there. He came happy and content, that was how he felt, and then he died. I don't know why it was, how it could have been so, but people here before used to say: 'Cousin Germán came here speaking English when he came from Curazao.'"(1980)

36. Pulido Ladera states about Simón Sosa: "That one was my godfather, I was big, already a man, when my godfather Simon would say that nobody would be taken to serve [in the army] over there, because he would go over and talk to General Gómez ,the president. Don Tito, a bad one who was in Uraca, who was the Administrator, linked up with another one here, Andrés Galíndez poisoned Simón Sosa. Well, people say that the woman Simón Sosa had here, allied herself with Don Tito and Andrés Galíndez and prepared that bad food for him...two days later he died of poisoning. ...That was during the time of Tarazona...you know that Tarazona was the one who was with General Gómez...and Don Tito was called Rodríguez Manzo. Murders were common at the time of Gómez dictatorship." (1980).
37. It was during the time of General Gómez that they made that road to Choroni...General Gómez put all those men he had prisoner in there with that pick to work. We had a man here who had been in the service for 12 years, and they were looking for him ; a person would go in to serve, then, and be in the service up to 12 years. It's not that way now, now a military man is in for only two years, and he is well-shod and well dressed. Before, no, before, it was with striped clothes and sandals, and that way was how he paid his service. If you had to desert, well...if you were not there serving and you just sat down, then when they grabbed you they would put you in a vat of salt water. They gave you 200 lashes; the ones going up they didn't count; the ones coming down were the ones that counted. Afterwards they would put you in a vat of salt water; it

would take a long time to get cured. Here there was a boy who served 12 years, and then he came here to die. Don't you see that over on that road they were digging, it was raining and he was carrying that water in his lungs. That 's not the way it is now. That one they used to call Juan Irene had deserted, he was cunning. The military would look for him over there, but it turned out that he was wile, that one. He would get here, at least, here to the road, and would become a 'ripe banana'. Yes, sir, you would eat ripe banana from that man and you were telling others that it was a ripe banana for real. Then you would get farther on, and he would become a trunk of a tree, that rascal,. Yes sir, I remember they threw that one out in Cepe. The commission got to Cepe, they threw that one out, the blanket was left hanging there, but they didn't do anything to that rascal." (Pulido Ladera, 1980).

38. Augusta Chavez and her husband also remembered the time of Simón Sosa,"when the plantation was in very good condition, totally clean, very well irrigated, and with everything under control. The cocoa plants were watched, and nobody could take a fruit. If for example you wanted plantain you asked the person in charge of this part of the plantation, and then he ordered that you should have the plantain. Then a worker of the plantation took the plantain with care, without damaging the plants and gave it to you. If a person damaged the plants, he was punished. Normally he or she was put in jail for some days, depending upon the damage. That was in the past. It was a joy to see the *patio* (the Churchyard) full of cocoa. It is true that workers were very badly paid, but the abundance of the crops was a stimulus for them to work. She also remembered how beautiful were the *Casa del Alto* and all the houses surrounding the churchyard, all big houses in colonial style. In one of them was stored the cocoa, another was the school and the other, particularly beautiful with big columns and a wide corridor, was the house used for the food supply .(1989)
39. Amalia and Juan Antonio were baptized in the *Casa del Alto* because the church was without a roof. People used to go to the oratory (we gave this name to the church at that time) to pray the rosary. The saints were mixed all together in a corner. That was in Mariano Michelena's time: nobody knew what happened to him; he suddenly disappeared: perhaps he was killed. Women and girls were in charge of carrying the bags full of cocoa to the churchyard; we carried them on our heads, and nobody gave us an ox , for example, to help us, nobody gave wood to roof our church. We said this to the person, who was at that time in charge of the harvest. He was not from Chuao, that was the custom in Guzman's and Gomez's time too. The person who

provided the necessary things for the plantation and also the supply of food and other goods to the pulpería (little shop, typical of Latin American towns) was not from Chuao, everything came from outside. So, this man called Eduardo Bran (Brandt), went to Guayabita , another plantation and asked there for permission to obtain wood to build his house in Puerto Cabello. In the end though he gave us the wood to put the roof on to the church. So, in 1918 I remembered the potters who came here to make the tiles for the roof.(María Tecla, 1989)

40. "Ah, when General Gómez died, there was looting. This looting, well, of the businesses here, that store was sacked . There is a nephew of Pilar who was shot and they blew away a hand, he was left with only one finger on his arm, like this. This here was also sacked, this store, it was a grocery store. Those two big houses that are there, they belonged to Andrés Galíndez, a man from Cuyagua, who used to sell a lot, there was nothing lacking there. General Gómez died. Up here around Paraíso they were going to make a dam where they were going to put in a [generating] plant, here in La Raicita. If that plant had been built, Chuao wouldn't exist any more. Then they began to carry those pipes down that way, all that stuff, down, all those things in those trucks that way, they took all that away. Those pipes they took away and they sold them I don't know who to. There the workers, the employees were all from the Andes. They were there at the command of General Gómez. Anyone who didn't talk like an Andean didn't make any money, not there at least. There were some chiefs who were Andeans and they did hardly a thing... Augusta can also remember that in Gomez's time, the plantation had a telephone, enabling people to communicate in any emergency. In this sense we are now more isolated because the telephone line was damaged many, many years ago and since then we haven't had it."(1989)

41. María Borges tells us: "Well, after Sosa was in the plantation, Pérez Jiménez was the owner of the whole world.He visited the plantation, that was the time he issued us our identification cards...He'd been the owner of this plantation since the government changed, and that was a dictatorship. He came over here...I am going to tell you the truth; the truth should not be hidden. We girls were in the yard and they hid us between the houses so that we wouldn't see him. When he came here,we wouldn't see him, but I was clever, I came back that way, and by one of those houses, I got to see him, over in the alley by the river. He was a short man, little and fat...I didn't see his face to perfection, because he was far away, and that was far away from where I was, but he was a little fat man and I never saw him again. A president coming to a certain place to learn

[about it], and [the people] hiding [us], isn't that something? That had never been seen before...he spent years here, until they overthrew him...and who was it that took over? One of those that is commanding now. Now we're living well, because now we're living as is our due, with the clear light, but at that time there was no light...there was a light, but it was hidden; yes, sir, very well hidden..." (1980)

And Venancio Bolívar speaks: "Yes, the principal commissary here, sent from Choroni, Mr. Pedroza, told a policeman who was here called Eleazar Núñez to order the people to shut themselves up inside their houses, because Pérez Jiménez was coming. When he was passing by the river, I was there standing in the door...he was a small man, a little short man, the only president I ever met. Juan Vicente Gómez was well known, I was working in 1922 when they were building the textile mills over there in Maracay. He went every three days to check the factory, he was the president that I knew well; he would get in his car and would go riding all around the city and the helpers would go watching over him." (1980)

Evarista Liendo and Manuel Ladera tell how one of the persons in charge of the visit of Perez Jiménez came to the town and said: "Look, sir, by order of the president, you must vacate [the meadows] with the animals, you have to get rid of those animals. And I told them: ' Sir, there are two sows who gave birth the same day, the other gave birth fifteen days ago. Well, you have to figure out what to do with them, because I am not going to eat them, they are new born. If you want, kill every last one of them once and for all, where am I going to go with my kids? I am not in the town, I am in a field. I live on the other side of the river, my animals don't go to the plantation. No [he said], you have to vacate these meadows because here the ones who have the right to have pigs are those in charge, the owners of Chuao ."(1980)

42. The policeman was Enrique Escobar. When that government fell, they were going to kill the one they had hired here, he was the overseer, and he still has not come here, a son of Chuao from here who was in charge. When he got here they said that they were going to kill him, no joke; he left here running that way, over that hill, that way by Turnero and to Caracas, he's in Caracas. From Pérez Jiménez's command, he left, and never came back...And the policeman that they had here, you must know him, a man they call Charles Núñez...a great big fellow...he is the policeman. Well, they were going to kill him and he wept like a little kid. That is when I, I even took his cap and I left. He was weeping; they were going to kill him, and he was saved because I went and told them to leave him alone. If not, they would have killed him right there. Then one person came around and told me; take that sow. And then he gave me this

big beast, this size, no kidding, I brought it from there, and a policeman that they had in the street, said: bring this sow over here, I'm going back to *Pueblo Quemado*. I get so angry and when I got there, I let her loose right there. Then someone came and grabbed the sow and took her to Choroni, no kidding..."(Manuel Ladera, 1980)

43. Augusta when talking about this said: " Here in Chuao we have something mysterious, which protects us, I believe it's the protection of Doña Catalina Liendo. For example, the road to Chuao was planned 100 years ago and until today it has not been built. One of the Administrators of Chuao decided, some years ago, to start the road. He went to Caracas to prepare all the papers and authorizations needed. One evening somebody knocked at the door and he opened it , and a tall lady, strong and of elegant appearance asked him if she could talk to him. He said : 'Of course, madam; come in, please. Sit down'. Then she asked him about the construction of the road to Chuao. He was very excited and told her about all the work he had done on the matter, and showed her the papers and permits he had already obtained. So, she told him who she was, Catalina Mexía de Avila and that she did not consider it necessary to make this road, and she immediately took the papers and tore them all up. Then she disappeared. The Administrator, Unda, was totally shocked by this turn of events. He came back to Chuao and in Choroni he went to Augusta's house and told her the story saying: "I'm not doing any more in relation to the construction of the road, because I think it's a mystery in Chuao. A few months later he also left the administration of the plantation. "(1989)

Augusta continued: "this is not the first time the government tried to take the water from Chuao. Some years ago, the government sent some engineers to build a dam (dike). They brought the material, but became sick every time they started doing the work. Then they abandoned Chuao, and the dam was not made. That is why I wasn't too worried this time, I knew that Chuao has a special protection. People who have tried to damage Chuao have always been punished. For example, once, a man wanted to take away the Cross of Forgiveness to know what is hidden in the ground . He only expressed his wishes and the following day he died." (1989)

Handwritten note: *Doña Catalina Liendo
sent the papers to the
government and they
were destroyed*

The origins of the slaves of Chuao

Introduction

The slave trade was carried out by mainly the Portuguese, British, Dutch and French from the early 16th century, until the 19th. The indigenous Indian, through disease, displacement and massacre could not satisfy the need for labour in the rapidly expanding colonial economy. (1) One of the first shipment of slaves authorized by the Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella arrived in 1502 on the island of Hispaniola, carried by Nicolás Obando, the first royal governor of the Island. (2)

There were, roughly speaking, two streams in the Atlantic slave trade: the official and the illegal, both of which existed side by side for centuries. Thus complicated any analysis of the African slave traffic, particularly in determining the numbers and origins of slaves carried into the Americas. However, broadly speaking the Africans who were sold to European traders as slaves were primarily war captives, victims of abduction or condemned criminals.

The traders were given guide lines as to the requirements of the clients in Spanish America. In one document of *De West Indische Compagnie* (WIC), the Director pointed out that the planters from Surinam preferred Angola slaves. The Spanish *Asientos*, (3) refused to accept slaves from the Bight of Biafra. Another Dutch document (1660) states that slaves from Calabar, the Cameroon and Rio del Rey (many would have been Ibos) are "completely undesirable because of their malicious and stubborn nature and their tendency to commit suicide"(4)

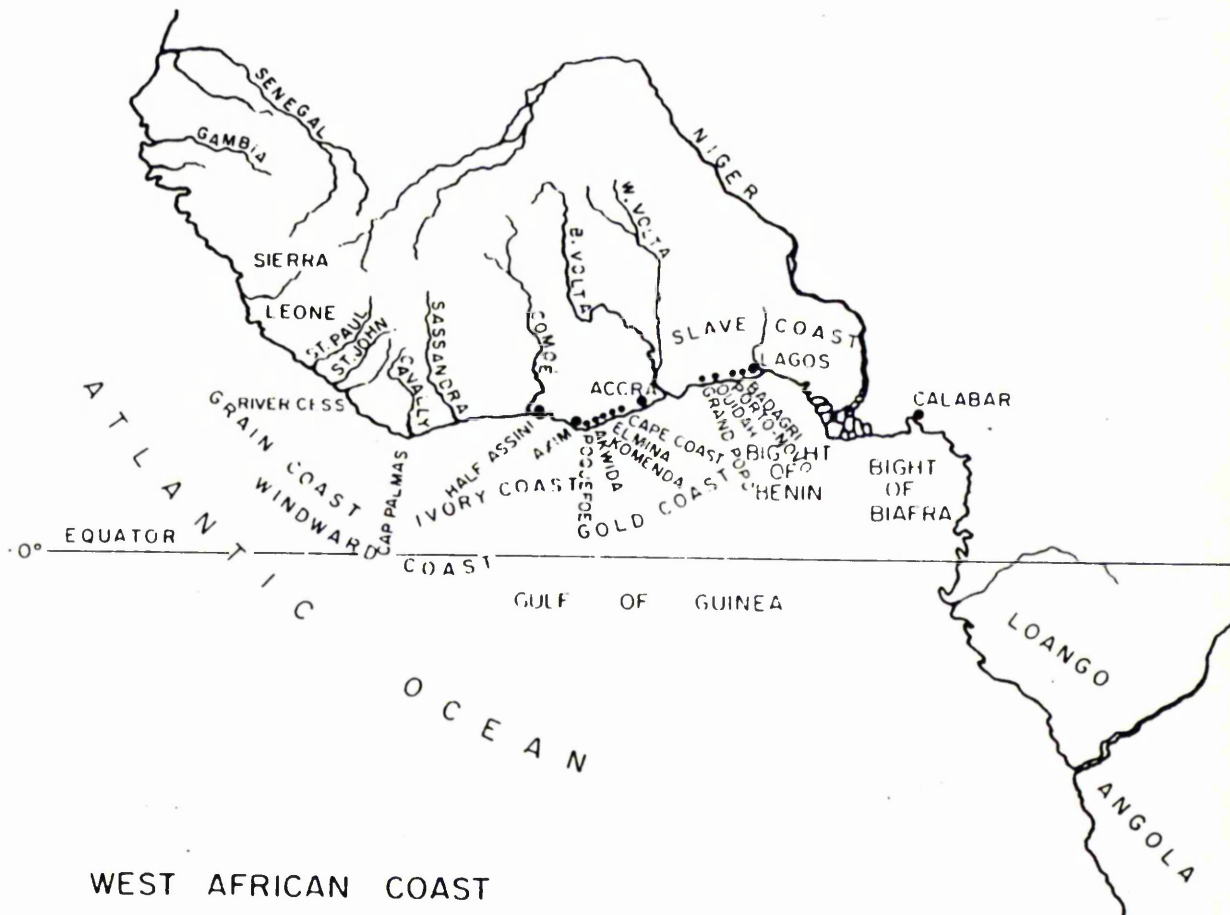
The physical appearance of the slaves, particularly the women was also important. The Spaniards seem to have preferred slaves who were pheno-typically black, as opposed to those who were racially mixed. The Caracas agent, recommended that slaves " be of the finest deep black... without cuts in their faces... the women to be a good stature without long breasts hanging down."(5). He also added a preference for the Angola type. Over the years, preferences also began to change. In the 16th century the slaves came predominantly from the Senegal river, with relatively few from other parts of West or Central Africa. Whereas in the 17th century Western African sources had shifted eastward to the Bights of Benin and Biafra and

the Central Africa and Angola. The heaviest concentration of the slave trade was during the 18th century, which was the apex of slave trading. Eight regions predominated as the point of origin: the Guinea Coast, Ivory Coast and Liberia called in the 18th century the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, the Slave Coast, (Togo and Dahomey) the Bight of Biafra, Central Africa (Angola), and Southeastern Africa (from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Delgado, including Madagascar Island) (6)

In the 19th century the Angolan sources began to diminish and the main supply areas were then Sierra Leone, the Bights of Benin and Biafra, but also North Congo, Angola and Mozambique.

As far as Venezuela was concerned, Colin Palmer, in his book **The Human Cargoes** states that "Caracas was elevated to factory status in 1735 in response to the increased demand for slaves in Venezuela and adjacent areas" (7) He based his information on the manuscripts in the British Museum, "Many of the ships that went to Caracas particularly after 1722, came from the Islands of St. Christopher, Curacao and St. Eustatius. The last two islands were quite close to the Venezuelan coast, and the South Sea Company found it convenient to buy slaves there from the Dutch." (8) There are also references in Curtin: **The Atlantic Slave Trade** to the relevance of Curacao as the centre of distribution of slaves. Although the English controlled the Slave trade during the 18th century, they had an arrangement with the Dutch to provide the *Capitanía General de Venezuela* with slaves. This Dutch trade was particularly important for Venezuela. (9) On this particular subject the thesis of Johannes Postma **The Dutch participation in the African Slave trade. Slaving on the Guinea Coast, 1675-1795** is interesting because it throws light on the Dutch trade, using direct sources such as the Archives in the Netherlands. He did not make any specific reference to Venezuela, but pointed out the importance of the Island of Curacao as the centre of the Dutch slave trade in the Caribbean. References to the trade between Curacao and different towns on the coast of Venezuela are also found in Venezuelan sources. According to the Chuao documents, for example, the illegal trade between the Chuao community and Dutch vessels which came from Curacao, lasted for more than a century. It could be said that the trade between the province of Venezuela and the island of Curacao was normal and continuous during the 18th century.

Map 5

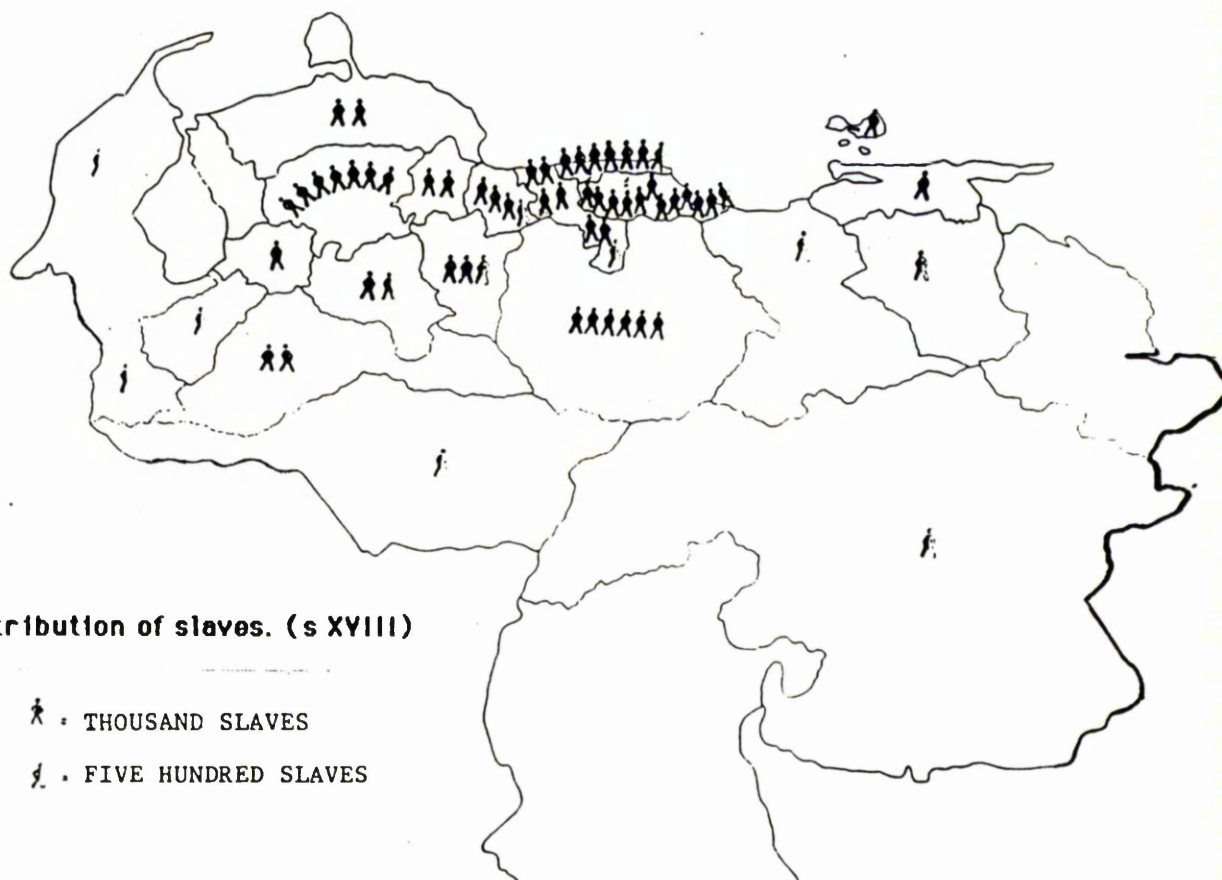


Another problem that occurs in attempting to identify the ethnic origin of slaves, is that the European slave traders had a habit of identifying nationalities either by the name of the port of origin or to pick one ethnic or linguistic term to identify a much larger group. Another view holds that most slaves were drawn from small and segmentary societies unable to defend themselves against the forces of the better organized states near the coast. Nevertheless comparing different sources one can draw some tentative conclusions.

From the various documentary evidence it appears that the majority of slaves who came to Venezuela in the 18th century were transported by the Dutch. According to Postma, the Dutch took slaves from two principal regions: The Guinea Coast and the Loango-Angola Coast. He also said that between 1675 and 1747, the heaviest concentration of purchases was in Angola, followed by the Slave Coast. The Gold Coast held a significant position with regard to the purchase of slaves, but the trade in the Loango-Angola region remained stable with only slight decline.(10) According to Brito Figueroa: Venezuelan imports during the whole of the Slave trade has been estimated at 121,000. Slaves imported into Venezuela allowed an annual average of 705 a year for the whole of the 18th century. Since it is known that the Venezuelan economy developed more rapidly in the second half of the century than in the first. (11)

Miguel Acosta Saignes in his book **La Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela** said that the slaves who came to Venezuela were mainly from Angola, Congo, and also from Calabar, Togo, and Dahomey. His work is based on Gonzalo Beltran Aguirre's book, *Archivo General de la Nación* (Venezuelan Archives) and he also used the local list of names to determine in an indirect way the possible origin of slaves in Venezuela. He concluded that the majority *gentilicios* (surnames) were Luango, Mina, Tari, Congo, Angolas, Carabalies, Mondongos. In other words, these names may indicate the following groups of slaves originated from the regions stated: "Mondongos and Luango from the Congo; Mina defined people from Dahomey; Tari from the south of Togo, and Carabalies from Calabar and The Angolas from Angola." (12) The determination of origin by *gentilicios* however, must be inaccurate as the concept of "surnames" in most African cultures is unknown. *Some* names originate from their circumstances of birth, and other names may take the form of son of...

Map 6



Thus grandfather rather than grandson would have different second names if they had one at all.

The slaves of Chuao

In the Colonial period the structure of slavery was more or less similar throughout the whole of Spanish America. The manner in which the Spanish colonizer named the slaves responded to the economic interest of the Colony. The name was given to the slave, by the owner and therefore contained values which were important to the Spaniards; it was another tool for the control of the slaves. According to Michelle Ascencio (13) the name of a slave was normally composed of two parts:

a) A Spanish first name, chosen by the owners, such as Luis or Francisco, for example, and preferably derived from the list of saints' names.

b) One or two other names referring to the 'ethnic origin' of the slave, the occupation, or the physique. These names are not surnames as such, but they can be regarded as surnames, because they permitted the identification of the slaves. (Later, they also would be identified by the owner's surname.) Other elements identifying the slaves were sex, age and marital state,

Possible sources for surnames were as follows:

i) An adjective referring to the racial features of the slave, such as black or mulatto

ii) An adjective referring to the place of birth of the slave: *criollo* or *bozal* (the first means born in America the last, in Africa)

iii) An adjective referring to a characteristic, such as young, handless, carpenter, overseer.

iv) An African name such as Congo, Carabali or Mina

v) An American name: Margarita, Curacao, for example

vi) A Spanish surname: such as Liendo, Ibarra, Alvarez or Fernández.

vii) Other names, which if neither American nor African, would be Portuguese, for example.

Whereas the first name was a matter of free choice in the part of the surnames were more specific in their attribution. For example if the slave came from Africa, he could have a name from category **iv** . If the surname focussed on the place of birth of the slave (America or Africa) it had to be chosen from the category **ii** , in other words, he

had to be identified as *criollo* or *bozal*. A further example is that if the slave was identified by the racial component, black or mulatto, (category 1), that excluded the distinction between *criollo* and *bozal* (which designate place of birth). This is because if the slave was mulatto it meant he was from America and if he was *bozal* it signified that he arrived recently from Africa. The only possible exception to the above system of combinations is *negro criollo* (black *criollo*)

So, in Colonial times existed a codex of identification of the slaves which was intended to fill the specific information needs of the administrators, slave traders, colonists or others. For example knowing if the slave was *criollo* or *bozal* was important in establishing the price of the slave. The same thing applied to the origin of slaves, such as Carabali, Lucumi (Yoruba), Wolof, Congo, because for example, in the history of the traffic of slaves, the importation of Wolof was forbidden for a time, as they were identified as rebellious and disobedient. The Mandinkas (also Minas) were not in demand because of their tendency to be *maroons* (runaway slaves). The Congos were better liked due to their ability for work in the fields, the Yorubas and Fons were preferred for domestic work. From the beginning the mulattos were considered dangerous to the colonial establishment.

Thus, the codex of slaves names performed a double function in the colonial administration. First, it was used to distinguish one slave from another, but at the same time it also made clear to the colonial institution the condition of the slaves. Surnames provided a classification relevant to their overall worth, whether determined by commercial value (*criollo* or *bozal*); by skill (domestic servant, artisan, farmer), by physique (young, old, slim, sick, useless for working), by tendencies to be dangerous (Mina, Carabali), or by the place they occupied in society (*negro*, mulatto).

To deal with the possible origins of the slaves of Chuao I have consulted documents from **La Obra Pía de Chuao**, of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and about the subsequent movements of slaves (14)

Document Nº 14, 1659, is the inventory of the assets of Pedro Liendo, and there are two lists of slaves. One refers to the married slaves and the second, to the unmarried, a total of 106 slaves. All had Christian names with surnames relating to the place of origin, physique and age. These indicate a variety of places from which the slaves come, but those from the Angola-Loango coast prevailed. (appdx1) (15) The preservation of African languages seemed

to be very difficult, due to their multiple origins; and the owner considered it important to distinguish the marital status of slaves given the need to have a stable group to work the plantation. On the other hand the plantation required the work of men, especially young men, and the number of both married and single men listed fulfil this need. The smaller number of women clearly reveals the economic interest of the landlord.

Document Nº 19, 1671 describes a total of 101 slaves: 40 men, 42 women and 17 children, all identified by their Christian names, as usual, but adding other specifications: age, marital status, parenthood, places of origins, and circumstance of birth or skill. (appendix Nº2)

This document reveals a majority of the slaves born in America, *negros criollos*; other denominations dealt with the degree of mixed blood, mulattos, or *zambos* for example. In regard to the African names, the number of Angolan origin was bigger than the others, which followed the pattern of the former document. In only 21 years the pattern of social organization had changed. Thus, the number of men and women became similar.

Document Nº 20, 1702 describes a total of 116 slaves: 40 men, 35 women, 41 children: (17 girls, 24 boys.) All were identified by their Christian names, age, marital status, parenthood and physique. Those who were unable to work because of their physique appeared with Christian names only and their defects were specified. For example: "Ignacio, blind and old", "Pedro blind and only one leg". Another is described "mulatto handless and useless". (appendix Nº 3). Other denominations appeared in some descriptions of women, such as two married to freed slaves, one to a *zambo* and one to a *negro*. The introduction of these new elements revealed the changes which were happening in Venezuela. So, by the 18th century slaves could acquire freedom according to the Law of Manumission. The mixture of different races had produced new types, for example, *zambo* (African and Indian), and mulatto, (African and European) These denominations were also useful to the landlord to differentiate them from the Africans.

The Administrator emphasises the physical condition of slaves, such as Mina, or Mulattos. The Loango slaves were identified by age and marital status to indicate their different value to the plantation. They were also recent acquisitions.

Document N° 55, 1742 describes a total of 146 slaves. 45 men, 42 women and 59 children: (35 girls and 24 boys) . All were identified by Christian names, parenthood, age, and other specifications such as physical condition and skill. The list was organized according to Christian names and families. Other details were given , such as the description of a child: 'one child without name', because he or she was not baptized yet. To determine the labour force the Administrator pointed out the defects and sickness of some slaves.

Document N° 145, 1808. This census of slave was done in a different way from the previous ones. The houses were identified by numbers and then a description of the slaves who lived in each house was given, pointing out marital status, and age. The majority appeared with their Christian names. (appendix N° 4)

In this document the increase in the number of women (104) in comparison to men (73) is notable, and perhaps due to the runaway of male slaves. The appearance of French names is interesting because, as oral tradition, confirmed some persons of French origin went to Chuao and started a family there, indicating the extensive contact that existed between people in the Caribbean area. African names and even *criollo*, *mulatto*, black or other specification are entirely omitted.

Document N° 162, 1825 describes a total of 275 slaves, identified by Christian names, marital status and parenthood. Age, as a mark, was eliminated, it is therefore impossible to determine who were the children on the list. There were 133 men and 142 women . Only one appeared identified as *Carayaca* (Venezuelan town on the coast).

Other documents give further information on this subject as follows:

Document N° 59, 1744. In the information presented by the Administrator, the item dealing with the expenses of the plantation named 17 slaves, identified as: 13 *negros* , 3 *mulattos* and 1 with only his Christian name. The interest in defining slaves with African surnames or others was already lost. This way of naming slaves no longer offered the colonial system valuable information .

Document N° 60, 1748. This named 20 slaves, one is identified only by his Christian name, the rest as *negros* followed by their Christian names (as usual). In addition the document pointed out the expense caused by the imprisonment of three *negros* and one

mulatto, because of their attack against the Majordomo of the plantation, who was wounded in the fighting. This is important as an example of the revolts which occurred in that century.

Document nº 62, 1749, deals with the freedom licences given by the Patrons of the *Obra Pía* to two slaves of the plantation: Gregorio de Liendo and Rafael de Liendo, both identified as *Morenos* (Dark-skinned people).

Document Nº 63, 1750, named twelve *negros*, one of whom was sent to jail when he arrived from Curacao island.

Document Nº 64, 1751, named four *negros*. One of them, Jose Cayetano, was imprisoned.

Document 65, 1752, named nine *negros* along with three others identified only by their Christian names and two others described as mulattos.

Documents 66,-69, from 1753 to 1756, presented the same information. All *negros* named are those who went to Caracas to give the accounts of the plantation to the Patrons and to attend the Good Friday ceremony.

From the analysis of those documents the populace of Chuao was partly of African origin, but the place of origin had been eliminated as relevant with the word *negros*, used as a collective noun.

Document Nº 70, 1756 deals with "freedom licences" granted to the slaves María Pascuala, Salvador de la Ascensión and Aurelia. Other letters of freedom specified the racial mixture : José Gervasio, mulatto slave; Domingo, *negro* slave, and Alejandro de Liendo, *negro* slave.

Documents from 1757-1776 gave the same type of information, except that they pointed out cases of runaway, imprisoned or pursued slaves, with greater frequency. For example, **Documents nº 105 and 107, 1773**, deal with two legal procedures against the black freed men of Chuao, Julián Cayetano Liendo, his wife Juana Inés and Pedro Pablo, because they did not want to leave Chuao and accepted the small amount of money the Administrator of Chuao wanted to pay for their *haciendillas de cacao* (small field cultivated with cocoa). They were imprisoned and after a length proceeding the decision was in favour of the *Obra Pía*. (See note 23, Some Historical Data)

From **Document nº 120, 1776**, identifies slaves by Christian names, as usual, but followed by the designation 'slave', used as a collective noun. At this time, the colony faced many slave revolts.

Many maroon settlements formed by runaway slaves were erected, so the *Obra Pía*, had a special interest in distinguishing between slaves and freedmen, and in identifying the overseers or chiefs of any maroon groups, and what kind of relationship had been established between maroons and slaves in the plantation. For example, **Document N° 121, 1776**, refers to "Juana Barbara, mistress of Jose Cayetano the overseer of the maroons and runaway slaves of the *Obra Pía*". (16)

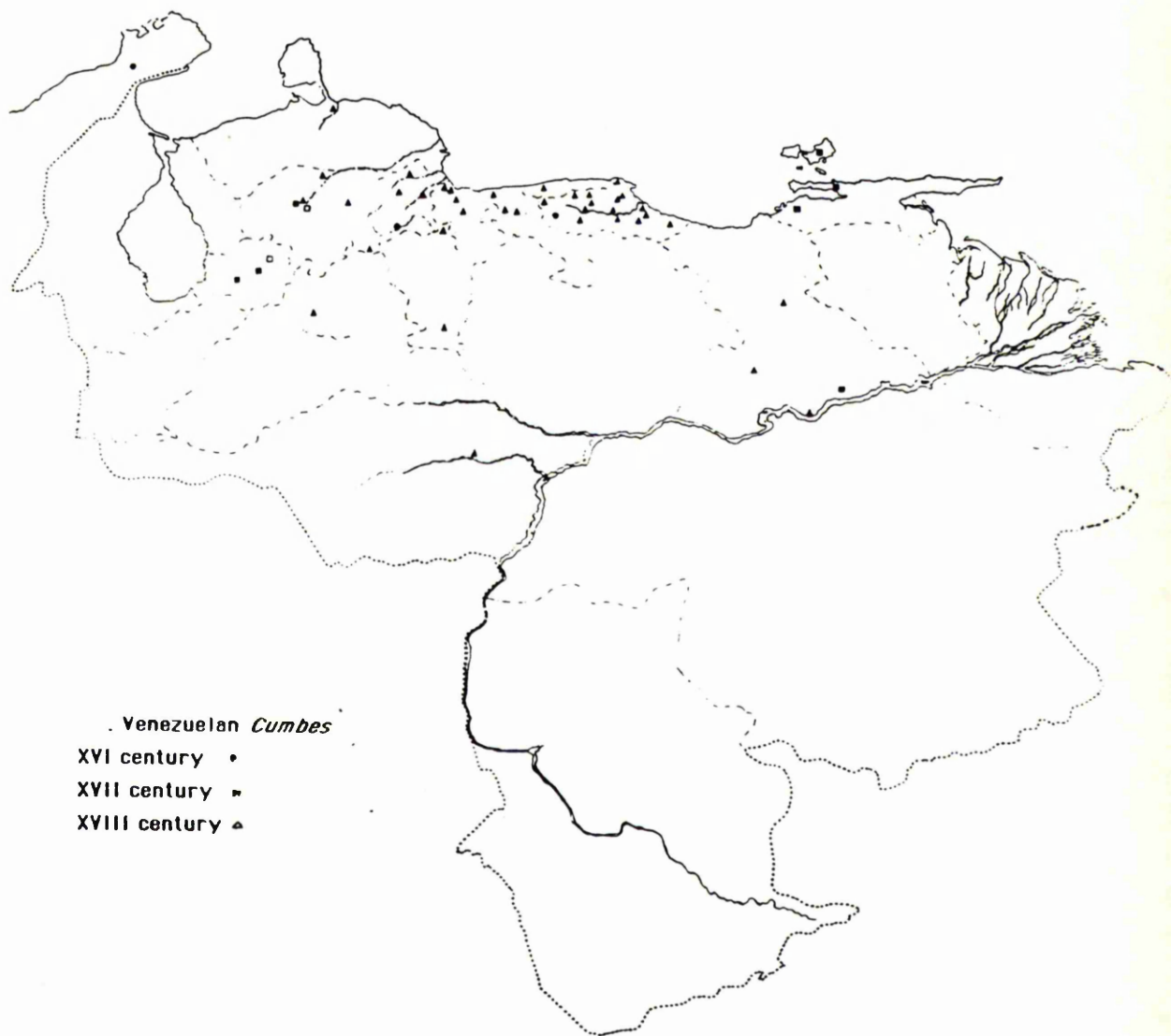
In **Document N° 152, 814** Luis Ladera the plantation administrator, gave the Christian names of pregnant women and some others. In most of them only the collective noun 'slaves' was used, with no individual identity. It was only important to let the owner to know the slave force he possessed.

Document N° 154, 1816, gives a list of 18 runaway slaves assumed to be with the insurgents fighting against the Spanish Crown. This document also listed dead slaves, and afterwards a list of five 12 and 13 year old boys who were given to Bolívar at the time of his visit that year by the mulatto Ignacio, one of the chiefs of the runaway slaves of Chuao. In the Chuao oral tradition, Edy Liendo and Augusta Chávez relate a story about Bolívar, who came to Chuao, desperate because of the problems he was having with the Independence War. He wanted to give up and commit suicide in Chuao, but in the end he did not do so because the people (slaves) of Chuao helped him.

The Padrón de esclavos in the year 1849 describes a total of 165 freed and 165 slaves. All identified by age, sex and skill. The average age between the two groups was maximum of forty years. Due to a lack of information it is impossible determine the marriages between slaves and free people, a way of obtaining freedom. (17) In the fieldwork were more slaves than freed. They worked in the cocoa plantation but also in the coffee plantation, founded in 1833.

In **Document year 1852**, it appears that the slaves had to work on the mountains, in the coffee plantation, without blankets and appropriate clothing. According to the information of the Majordomos "they ordered the two dresses, the owners of the plantation gave them once a year." Although suffering, misery, illness and insanity the slaves were still a productive force.

Map 7



Document year 1853 lists 189 slaves and freedmen, it is a considerable decline in comparison to the previous years.

Until 1854, in Aragua State there was extensive local traffic in slaves. The *Obra Pía* bought and sold slaves, specifically in the towns and plantations of the Aragua State. This type of market were intense in towns such as, El Consejo, San Mateo, Turmero, Cagua, Villa de Cura, San Sebastián, Valle de la Pascua, La Victoria (centre of the local traffic of slaves and freedmen in Aragua) and also Caracas. (18)

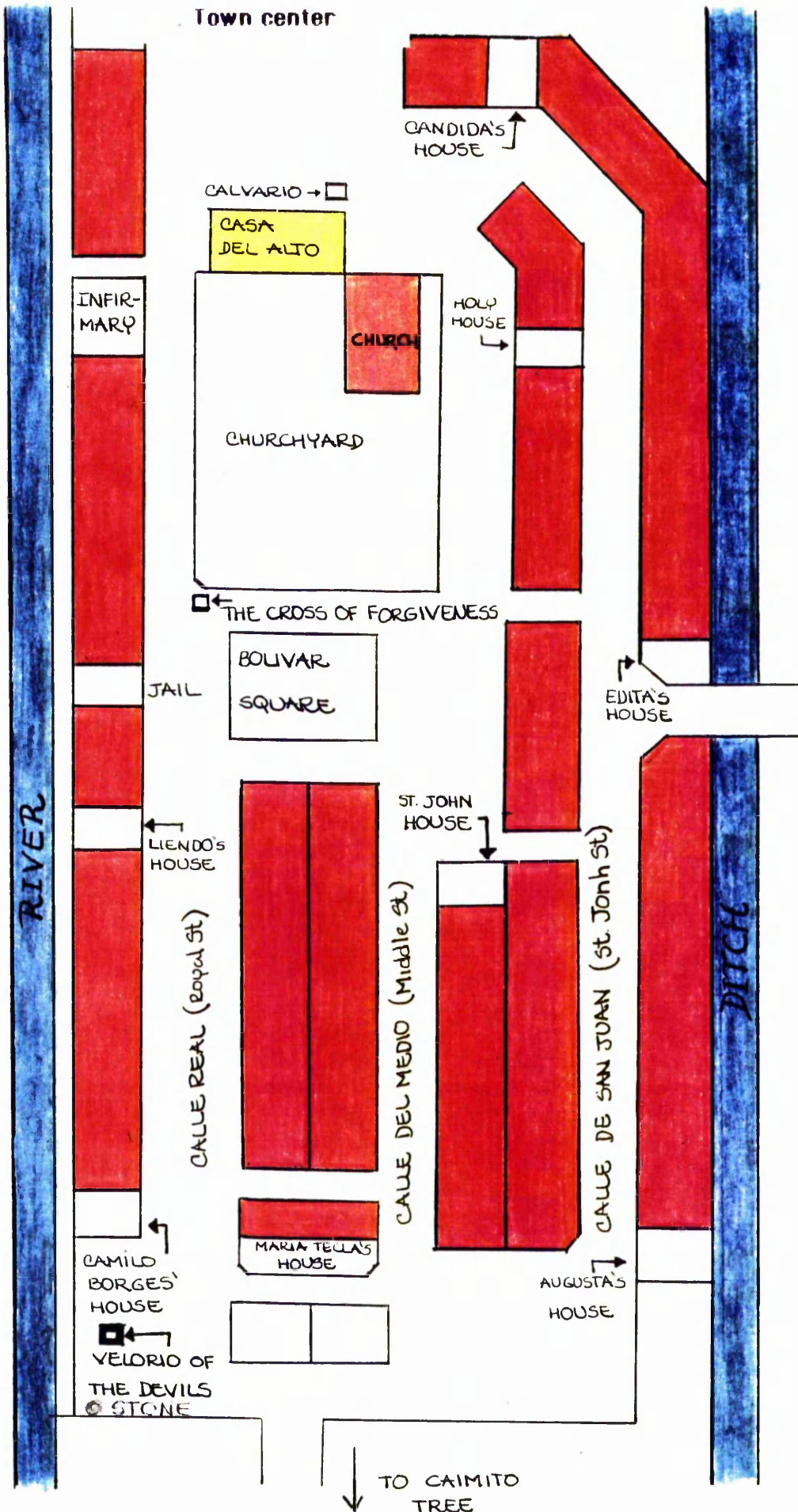
In 1854, when the abolition of slavery was declared, people from Turmero went to Chuao to persuade people that if they remained in the same plantation, in spite of the abolition of slavery, they would become slaves again. Chuao became depopulated. To avoid this it was necessary to find other places to live; This exodus happened in all the plantations of Aragua State. The owners had to offer salaries and allow people to cultivate land without paying rent for it. The majority of Chuao people, as a result, came back to the plantation.

Oral tradition and slaves

Reverting to the possible origin of slaves the words of Venancio Bolívar and María Tecla Herrera, throw some light in the subject and specifically on the make-up of Chuao society.

According to Venancio Bolívar : "*Pueblo quemado* was the town where the Indians used to live. Then the Spaniards came and took their lands and threw them out, burnt the town, and claimed all the lands of Chuao. The Indians disappeared, probably, I have heard, they were killed. The *negros*, I have heard, were brought here in the time of General Guzmán Blanco (19) from very far, from Africa, because the Africans were very potent (strong, vigorous), then he took them, to mix the race, to make the race powerful. But they were here before Guzmán Blanco time, they were brought from very far from Africa to mix the race." (1979) .

This information was confirmed by María Tecla on December 24 1989 when I was in Chuao. María Tecla recounted her memories about the last slaves in Chuao. She showed the houses where the slaves used to live, in the *Calle Real*, (Royal Street). (See plate 8,p99) "The old Juan's house was the meeting place of men, women and children, who came there to hear him. I learnt the Doctrine from him, I was one of the best, the other who also learnt very



quickly was Isabel Bolívar Cayetana's daughter. I believe old Juan learnt the Doctrine from other slaves. He wasn't freed, he was a slave. When I grew up I said as the slaves said before that he was like an overseer. The house, which belongs to the Corpus Christi Society nowadays, was formerly the property of a woman slave Antonia Pía. I also knew María Casilda Bolívar de Liendo who was another slave. You see that house (she pointed out a house in the *Calle Real*, where the slave lived), at that time you had to step up to enter the house. She was the great grandmother of Juan Chávez (Augusta's husband). She also taught us the Doctrine, one day it was taught by Juan Liendo, next day, by María Casilda. All children came here to take the lessons of the Doctrine. And here, in the house of Camilito (Camilo) Borges lived two old slaves, the old Lacu and his mother. He died very, very old, in 1918. When I knew him, he could see, only a little, he was a little old man but he stood straight, not like the elders now, who are hunchbacked. They (he and his mother Alejandra) were Chavez. They talked in a strange manner, an intricate way, for example, he said *iguna*, *iguna* for the Spanish word *ninguna*). He was the great grandfather of Gregorio Borges (Camilo Borges' son). The old slaves called this language *luango*, they said they spoke *luango*, they talked to you in a very difficult way, I knew one whose name was Abipa, she did not say *conmigo* (Spanish word meaning with me) as we said but *o con....migo* (in the imitation of slaves María Tecla gave a very strong accent to the first syllable, uttered from the throat). She had a daughter called Marcelina and she called her Socorro, but she did not pronounce the word as we do, she said: *Soacoarra* (the 'o' very near the sounds of the 'a') In María Tecla's imitation of slaves' speech the sounds of the vocals seems to be more open than in Spanish and also the 'r' sound appeared to be stronger than in Venezuelan-Spanish).

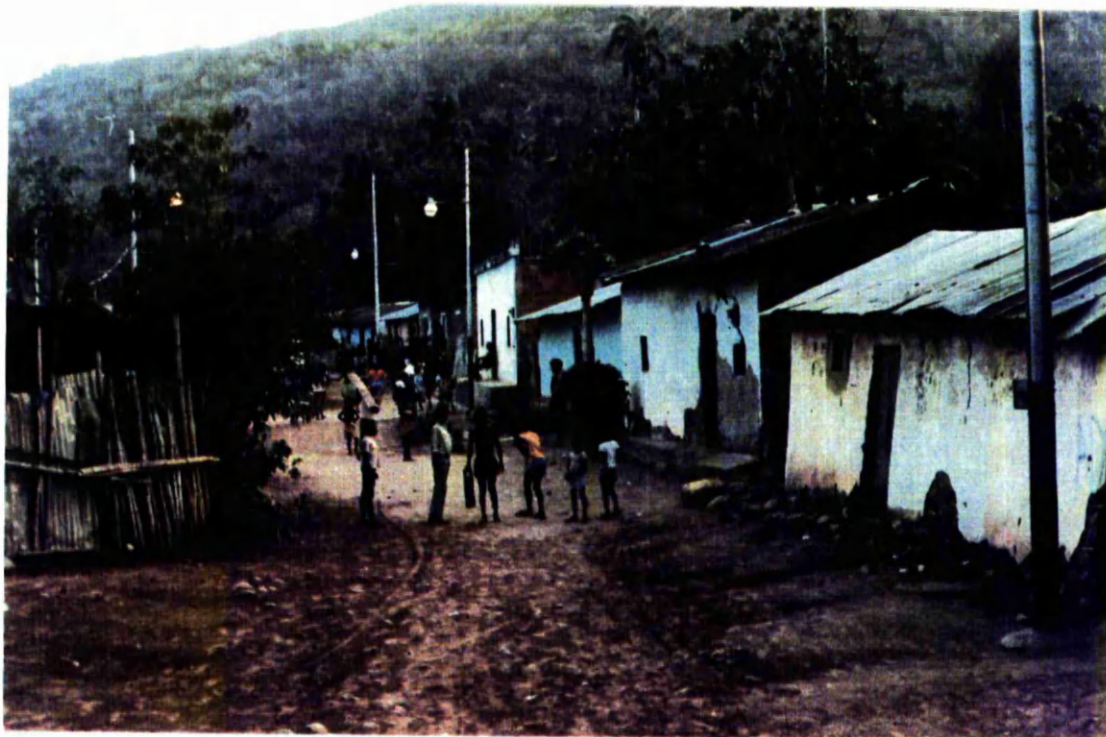
María Tecla continued: "And in this house (she indicated it) lived the Bolívars, and there used to live old Facunda, she was freed (I asked if she spoke *luango*) No, she was freed, she didn't speak *luango*.

Talking about the ancient families of Chuao Eddy Liendo says: "Actually we were at the beginning all Liendo, because all slaves belonged to Doña Catalina, but you know the majority of the people here live together without being married, then sometimes it is very difficult to remember who was who, what was the parenthood. For example Evarista Liendo, the Chácara's mother is not from my family,

Plate 15



1. Women talking in the Calle del Medio (Middle Street). In the background the house of St. John the Baptist. 1980



2. Children walking through the Calle de San Juan. (St. John Street). On the left hand side the house of the last Loango slaves of Chuao. 1984.

probably we are related but from a very far side. The Liendo family has always participated in the festivities of Chuao, The Bolívar family, also. Venancio Bolívar was like a priest, he was in charge of taking out the statue of the child Jesus to a house, to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, There was another *pesebre* (crib) and we use to drink and to sing *aguinaldos* (Christmas songs) in this place. He also participated in Corpus Christi, making the altars and he was the *capitán limosna* (captain of Alm, see plate 37, p. XXXVII). Augusta was very fond of him, because he married her aunt, and she lived with them after her grandmother's death. Augusta is an Almenar, but her grandmother was a Liendo. The Franco family belongs also to an important family, they participate in the festivities. The Ladera family also takes part in the festivities, but they came from the coast, from Puerto Cruz. The Hernández family belong to the old families of Chuao. Maritza Tagliaferro and Edita González are my cousins because they belong to the Liendo family of my side. María Tecla is also my relative because her mother was Liendo. The Bacalao family is an important family too, Candida Bacalao was captain of St. John the Baptist, she helped in the Corpus Christi festivity, making the altars, she always participated in all festivities of Chuao, but Candida's daughters are not like their mother, they don't participate in the events, only her grandson does, who is Julio Bacalao, the drummer of Corpus." (1989).

Others talked of their ancestors. However ascertaining the origin of surnames is a very difficult task, for many reasons, such as the several concubinages, and the habits people of Chuao have, of giving different surnames to their children. For example, if they liked the surname of one of the grandfathers or any other surname of the family they may give it to a child. It is only possible to say that the families, which lead the festivities, nowadays, are descendants of slaves of the plantation, who have played important roles in the community, in different periods of the Chuao life.

In summary, the slaves who were sent to Chuao probably came mostly from Angola and Congo. Some may have come from the South of Togo and Calabar. Although it is important and fascinating to find the real origin of slaves, a work which finished there, it would be interesting only as a reconstruction of the past. It is, however, essential to relate the past to the living history, to set the problem in an actual context.

The contact between African, European and Indian cultures produced a situation, in which the Amerindians lost their land and freedom and soon disappeared, some in genetic cultural fusion but the majority were killed by the Spaniards or even by the Africans.(20) The Catholicism, the religion of the Spanish group , played an important role imposing a system of belief and values, which in certain ways were reinterpreted to produce the popular religious manifestations described in the following chapters. (21)

Notes

1. According to Sánchez Albornoz: "The native Central American population was estimated in 25 million whilst the Spaniard arrived. In 1519 only 17 million native Americans survived, four years after the European invasion in 1548, only 6 million. In the early 17 century around 1630, the Indians of Central America scarcely reached 750,000, that is only the 3% of the population before the conquest. War and violence caused the initial contraction; social and economic changes precipitated collapse. The precarious nutritional balance. The conquest brought about a change of diet as well as a change in the methods of food production. Pauperization combined with the loss of their own culture, thus constricted the Indians capacity to reproduce themselves. On the other hand, epidemics provide a totally involuntary cause of population decline. These diseases, above all smallpox, malaria, typhoid and influenza afflicted Europe, were transferred to America. By contrast America had no disease to contribute to the world."(*Population of Colonial Spanish América in The Cambridge History of Latin America*)
2. "The conquerors and officials of the Spanish crown received the first licenses to import slaves into America as a reward for the services they had rendered or as compensation to personal expenditure incurred in the discovery or the conquest. Hernán Cortez and Pizarro both received such recognition" (Sánchez Albornoz, *op. cit.* p. 19)

3. The Spanish Crown authorized the slave trade in three different ways: The system of license, the *asiento* (with private traders and with companies), the system of free trade. The first was the most important during almost all of the 16th century. The *asiento*, the first was given authorizing the Welser to import, annually 4,000 slaves to the province of Venezuela. During the 17th century the system of the *asiento* was established with private traders. At the end of the 17th century the *asiento* with companies began. In 1696 with the Portuguese Royal Guinea Company, which finished in 1701. A new *asiento* was signed with the French Guinea Company, for ten years, but the French Company could not carry out the contract. Acosta Saignes said that the French company fulfilled its contractual obligation until the beginning of the Anglo-Spanish war. As a result of that war the English obtained an *asiento* from the Spanish, in 1713. The *asiento* opened the Spanish colony to the South Sea company and to independent traders as well.
4. Johannes Postma, **The Dutch participation in the African Slave trade**, p.182.
5. Philips Courtin, **The Atlantic Slave Trade**, p.62
6. Ann Pescatello. *The Afro-American in Historical perspective*
7. Colin Palmer, **Human Cargoes**, p. 60.
8. Ibid, p. 98.
9. Philips Curtin, **The Atlantic Slave Trade**, p. 203.
10. According to Johannes Postma: "During the middle of the 17th century Holland and Portugal jointly dominated the traffic in slaves. The Portuguese separation from Spain in 1640, and the termination of the eighty years war between Spain and Holland aided and opening another slave market for the Dutch via the Spanish colonies. Periodically Dutch ships also supplied English and French West Indian Island with slaves. The Dutch director of Luanda suggested to his superior that the Antilles Island of Curacao would serve as a convenient depot for the slave trade with the American mainland." (Curacao was captured by the Dutch in 1634.) For the period of 1660-1713 Curacao functioned as one of the most important slave trade import depot for the new world. Most of the slaves were fetched from Curacao in small Spanish boats from the Spanish colonies on the mainland. "Spanish agents for the

asiento admitted in 1681 and again in 1685 that the Dutch were the sole satisfactory source of blacks and that they controlled the slave trade with America. Although Dutch participation in the slave trade continued increasing in the early 18th century, their role in the traffic was gradually eclipsed by the French and the English".(pgs. 15-22)

11. Federico Brito Figueroa, **La estructura económica de Venezuela colonial**, p. 137-138
12. Miguel Acosta Saignes, **Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela**, p131-144.
13. Michelle Ascensio, *Del Nombre de los esclavos*. Código de nombramiento de esclavos en la Epoca colonial.
14. Among the sources already mentioned, the following works have been used to analyse these documents: José Redinha, **Distribuição étnica de Angola** illuminated some of the names which appeared in the Chuao lists of slaves. Geographical names have been sorted out to identify the possible origin of slaves of Chuao; Robert Cornevin, **Histoire du Congo, Histoire de peuples de L'Afrique Noire**, **The African Cambridge History of Africa**, Volume IV, and Miguel Acosta Saignes, op. cited.
15. According to José Redinha, the following names are Angolan: **Guanguela** (ethnic-linguistic group lunda-quioco). **Lubolo** (minority ethnic group **Kikongo, Libolo**. In XVIII century documents appears as **lubolo**. **Samba** (minority ethnic group **Kimbundo**) **Luango** (minority group Kikongo). Angola name of a chief of the **Jinga**, adopted by this ethnic group. The Portuguese called Angola all inhabitants of the occupied territory, later they extended the name to the whole province. Thus, Angola is the collective noun for different ethnic groups. According to Cornevin **Lamba** and **Mina** came from the South of Togo. According to Arturo Ramos, the name **Mina**, in Rio de Janeiro, gathered all blacks who did not belong to the Bantu group, and this name included slaves from the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast. Probably that was the same in Venezuela. But also the name can be originated in Port of El Mina o de Mina, important Portuguese port to the slave trade in Ghana. **Carabalí** came from Calabar. **Mandinga** part of the group called **Mandé**, from the Senegal valley and Niger. They were considered in America, sorcerers, fighters and cruel people(In Venezuela in the colloquial language mandinga means evil). **Bañon** according to Beltrán Aguirre, came from the region of the river Cazamancia. They enter Latin-America with other names such as **Bañol**

red.?

and **Pañol**. According to Beltrán Aguirre, the **Kongos** came from North and South of Zaire from Nyanga to D'ande. In **Africa in the sixteenth century**, appears that at the end of the 16th century, Portuguese introduced Christianity into the region South of the Congo, the conversion of its rulers were very important. So, Christianity at the end of the 15th century flourished there. Apparently that Christianity never got more than skin-deep in this domains. **Folupa**, folopo, felupes, wolof, from Senegal. For the rest of the names mostly from Angola and Congo, see **appendix 1**.

16. **La Obra Pia de Chuao**, p 420
17. The Manumission decree is proclaimed the 19th of July 1819 by the Congress of Angostura, (Venezuela), and in 1821 it was ratified as a law in the Congress of Cucuta (Colombia). The owners of the plantation exploited the manumitted in a indirect way of with 'the letter of freedom'. The manumitted must have it to travel through the country, even to go for a plantation to another. So, the owners gave freedom to their slaves, but did not give immediately the letter of freedom, that could be delayed many years, in this form they maintained the manumitted in their plantations working for them. According to Brito Figueroa, by 1853 in Chuao the slave's work tends to disappear, substituted first by the manumitted work and later by the so called rural labourers. "The process of manumission and the development of the rural labourers is a general outline, which defines the economic Venezuelan situation at that time. Chuao is a good example to illustrate the general pattern" (Brito Figueroa, **op cit.**, p.293)
18. Federico Brito Figueroa. **El problema tierra y esclavos en la historia de Venezuela** makes extensive use of documents of Chuao, belonged to the Universidad Central de Venezuela, which have been not yet published.
19. The General Antonio Guzmán Blanco exerted several times the President of Venezuela. He dominated the national politic between the years 1870-1888. His father Antonio Leocadio Guzmán was the founder of the Liberal party, he was an important personage of the Venezuelan life in the past century. Thus, the Guzmán dominated the national policy during the 19th century. The comment of Venancio Bolívar could be important indicating that the traffic of slaves, probably in an illegal way had been continued after the abolition of slavery, although Venezuela was the first country in continental America to declare the abolition of slavery, but in practice it continued during the 19th century. At the time of the abolition, there were still twenty thousand slaves.

20. The Spanish American situation has also been somewhat different from that of the United States. In the long run the Spanish and Portuguese were distinctive in their final acceptance of the inevitability of intermixture. Latin America "took concubinage as a matter of course; masters acknowledged their mistresses and gave them special privileges. (Pescatello , Anne. **Old roots in the New lands**. (p.51) According to the Venezuelan writer Mario Briceño Iragorry (1897-1958) in **Suelo y hombres**: "Between the yankees(North Americans) a drop of black blood converts into black the most white lineage, in Venezuela one drop of white blood changes in a positive way the most black ancestry" (p.44)
21. Henrique Soublette, a Venezuelan writer(1886-1912), who belonged to the upper class of Venezuela, in a letter to a friend dated 1908, Macuto, (town in the central coast of Venezuela) commented the different approach to the upper classes in Caracas and the rural people had about religion: " The first one, is influenced by the Spanish Christianity, in which religiosity is a fanaticism and has to do only with sacrifice, torture, affliction, desolation and lamentation. The second is produced within the spontaneity and ingenuity of the rural life, in close contact with nature. He added, the religion of this people is as a poetic cult, there are no meditation about hell, or the martyrdom of the Saints. Here religion is joy, incense, flowers, songs. The cult is dedicated to three or four images. No one tortures thinking how to win the other life, here fasting is to eat lovely fish, and crabs salads. The festivities in May are delicious, specifically the *Velorio* of the Cross, in which people pray very quick the rosary to cover the cross and start dancing outrageously. This is a religion that I can accept because it does not cause damage, is useful and represents, as I said before, a poetic ritual."(p.122) This comment, very spontaneous expressed, without any further intention, could be one of the clue to understand the make up of popular religiosity in Venezuela, in a way, influenced by the Africans.

The Catholic Church and its Relationship with Chuao

The Church in Venezuela

During colonial times the Church in Venezuela appeared to have the same status as it did in other areas of the Spanish Empire in America. However, it is believed that the institution never made such deep roots in Venezuela as in other parts of the Empire. The church was subject to particular conditions in Venezuela that weakened its institutional control.

The length and anarchic nature of the conquest and the reckless individualism of the conquerors left a greater heritage of disorder, factionalism and disruptive forces than in other parts: the geography and isolation of this area and its subsequent neglect by Spain left these forces largely unchecked.

Francois Depons, in his **Voyage to the Eastern Part of Tierra Firme**,⁽¹⁸⁰⁶⁾ gave testimony to these difficulties: "Of all the conquests which have been achieved in the New World in the name of the Spanish monarch, that of those parts of which we are now describing (Venezuela) was the longest, the most toilsome, and, we may add, the most imperfect. The mountains with which the country is covered, the multitude of rivers whose inundations interrupt communications for a great part of the year; the lakes, marshes, and deserts posed difficulties which only those men violently goaded by ambition could brave; but what must have contributed still more to retard the progress of the conquerors in several parts of America was the multiplication of Indian governments, which, not being incorporated so as to form a nation like those of Mexico and Peru, rendered the victories of the Spanish less decisive and their negotiations more difficult. Every Indian chief *cacique* waged a separate war, a war of stratagem and ambush; the *caciques* seldom entered into leagues and even more seldom either offered or received battle in open field. A conquered nation gave sometimes no more than four leagues of additional territory to the conquerors; the country was disputed by inches, and its conquest effected by dint of courage, patience, privation and danger." (1)

Probably the power of the Caribs (Indian group) on the coast and the interior of Venezuela made this land less attractive to the conquerors. In addition it was considered a poor land in comparison

to others, so that Venezuela was only fully incorporated into the Spanish Crown later than other countries.

The description of the development of the church in the 16th century is difficult -due to the scarcity of available information- and it is impossible to give accurate dates. Nevertheless some information dealing with Evangelism is found in this century, such as the narration of Vespuccio, the missionaries' attempt, and the realisation of the first ecclesiastical meeting (Synod) in Caracas. (See page 111)

Americo Vespuccio on his journey, in 1505, along the coast of Venezuela commented that the Baptism of the Indians was done without any preparation or explanation of the Doctrine. He did not even mention having seen any priest accompanying that expedition.(2)

The missionaries

The Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella twice tried to achieve the Christianization of the Indians by sending, in 1520, two expeditions of missionaries with religious images and books to teach them the religious faith. But both expeditions failed, that of the Dominicans in a tragic manner. Two of the Dominican monks were killed by the Caribs when they attempted to convert them.

Moreover the Arawak (another Indian group) were not disposed, around 1519, to accept the new religion, making fun of the new God and his Ministers. Francisco de Vallejo, Mayor of Santo Domingo, who knew the Indians very well, said : " No Indian will be a real Christian , the monks can spend 5.000 years trying to convert them and they will not be successful". (3) The Monks were no more optimistic than the political authorities. In 1521, in the revolt of the Indian of Cumaná, two other Dominicans were killed. Thus, the project of the education and conversion of the Indian became very difficult. Neither ecclesiastical nor political control of the Indians was successfully achieved in colonial Venezuela.

The work of the missionaries, as already said, began in Venezuela early in the 16th century, but the real programme of transmitting Spanish civilization and the religious faith did not really begin until the middle of the 17th century .

There is the additional factor that, after a century and a half of valiant, if misdirected, effort the conquerors had failed to subdue the Indians in Venezuela. In recognition of this fact Philip II, in 1652,

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ordered that armed conquest cease. In a royal decree of the same year, he instituted the missionary system. The orders which came to Venezuela were Dominicans, Franciscans, Capuchins, Augustinians, Jesuits, Candelarians and Mercedarians. However the division of the lands between Orders gave the Franciscans the largest share in Venezuela and they were also established in Caracas. All missionaries had deserted by the end of the 17th century. The causes of their failure lay not only in lack of defence, but also in the absence of means of subsistence in the isolated regions and in the general unhealthy state of the country. The courage and bravery of the missionaries is demonstrated by the Jesuits, who in 1731 returned, and by 1736 had established six flourishing missions on the upper Orinoco. The primary purpose of these missions in the programme of the Spanish crown was to instruct the Indians in the Catholic faith. In addition the Laws of the Indies ordered the missionaries to learn the language of the Indians with whom they worked. This task was very difficult in Venezuela due to the multiplicity of native languages, though notable work was achieved in this area by Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries. With the expulsion of the Jesuits of America in 1767 the Augustinians tried to carry on their work, but teaching in the missions in the province of Caracas was done entirely in Spanish. (4)

European attitudes towards the Indians

A Venezuelan historian, Pedro Manuel Arcaya said: "The tendency of the European in the presence of this primitive crudeness and absence of the restraint of any institutional tradition was to give way to savage impulses instead of subjecting the Indians to the restraints of organized society; particularly so, when his blood was mixed with that of the Indian and the Black" (5). According to Miguel de Olivares (Prefect of the Capuchins of Caracas) the task of the church in reducing the Indian of Venezuela was far more laborious than the work among the natives of Mexico and Peru; in fact he doubted that it could ever be accomplished. They possess too low an intelligence and culture to be instructed; the conquerors had with reason doubted that they were rational. They understood "nothing about the eternal"(6) The same negative point of view was given by the archbishop of New Granada: "God forbid a bishop of the Catholic church to prefer anything to the propagation of the gospel, but the interest of religion itself demands that one casts

pearls before swine"(7) Depons considered these Indian not fit for religion. (8) Humboldt found little difference between the savage and the converted Indians; both "were occupied by wants of the moment, and showed a marked indifference to religious opinions" (9)

What was true in Venezuela was, of course, more or less true in other parts of the empire; to attract the Indian the church had to tolerate many compromises with Indian customs.

To summarize the religious work of the church among the Indians: it involved the destruction of their belief and worship, conversion to Christianity, construction of missions and churches, and instruction in the Catholic creed.

The Synods

The ecclesiastical organisation of the Venezuelan Church during colonial times was based upon three pontifical dispositions: the foundation of the Bishopric of Coro in 1536; the transfer of that See to Caracas, in 1636, and its elevation, later, to the category of an archbishopric in 1803. Three Synods were celebrated in Caracas. The first Synod, (1560) was of no great relevance, because the dioceses were only at their inception. The dispositions of the Second Synod held in Caracas in 1609 had fallen into disuse by the time the third Synod (1689) was celebrated. "Thus, the Synod of 1687 is the only available source of Diocesan law that remained in force for any length of time during the colonial period. The synodal constitutions of Doctor Baños y Sotomayor represented a forceful correction of the extreme deterioration noted, and allowed for a rebirth of the spiritual and ecclesiastical life within the purest canonical orthodoxy. Moreover these dispositions were to be the fundamental guide for the Venezuelan Church for over two hundred years. Thus, the Synod of Caracas of 1687 is not just one more piece in the fabric of ecclesiastical dispositions, but is rather "...the one which serves as the ecclesiastical juridical basis for the formation of all that constitutes the essence of present-day Catholicism in Venezuela." (10)

In Title III of the document of the Synod, entitled *Of the Obligations of Priests to preach the Word of God*, priests are exhorted to obey the disposition of the Council of Trent, and produce a book, The Catechism, which would help in the teaching of the principles of the Christian religion. With reference to the teaching

of the catechism, the synodical papers state that "...in the rest of the province it is done in very few cities and towns; and in lesser places and in Indian and Black groups, it is evident to us that it is regularly not done, from which follows the ignorance and blindness of the subjects, the ease and liberty of sins, the loss and corruption of the customs..." (11)

Disposition N° 76 states that "Our indoctrinating priests must not permit that in the towns of the aforesaid Indians there live "mestizo" (half-caste) Spaniards, mulattos, or Blacks, due to the great harm done to the afore-mentioned Indians, because they are usually dishonest, corrupt people..."(12)

Dispositions N° 78 and 79 are interesting from the point of view of the black slaves, because they indicate the attention that should be given to them and the need to give them religious orientation.(13)

The festival of Saint John the Baptist is registered, in those dispositions, as one of the important celebrations. Among the moveable feasts appears the day of Corpus Christi: the eve, processions, mass, and the octave.

The Guipuzcoana Company

With the arrival of the *Guipuzcoana* Company in 1730 a series of problems arose. The company, which had been granted a monopoly of trade by the King, prejudiced the interests of the great plantation owners of the country, the *criollos*, who had their own ships and had carried on a continuing trade with Mexico and the Dutch, through the island of Curazao. The economic problems caused by the newly granted monopoly was one of the principal motives behind the rebellion of Juan Francisco de León in 1749. (14) This is relevant to the argument that the retaliatory measures which Chuao suffered may have been produced by a union of religious and economic interests.

In the Archives of Seville in a letter dated 15 June 1739, it is said: "The Caracas Company asked for permission to carry the cocoa to Veracruz in ships of the *Guipuzcoana* Company. The owners of the plantations and the Captains of the vessels were opposed to allowing this concession, as it was against their economic interest." (15) Many letters were written, giving support to the petition of the owners of the plantations, such as one written from the Abadeses and nuns of the Convent of the Mothers of the Conception dated 11-12-1744 : " It is very important for the common

health of all the natives of the province to comply with the petition of Conde San Xavier' (signed :Sor Franca Petronila de Agustín . Abadesa, and followed by the signatures of many nuns and the secretary Rosalía Petronila de la Pasión.)" (16) This support for the Conde San Xavier was also given by the community of the Convent of Mercy, because of the help they received from the harvesters in the celebration of the festivities of the convent: "We beg your Majesty to favour the divine cult, and the goodness of all people, especially the sacred families, and the poor of the Redemptorist, (religious congregation founded in 1732 to do missionary work among the poor)to attend to the common need and the right petitions of the Conde San Xavier and other harvesters..." (Caracas, December 14th. 1744) . (17) The Provincial of the Order of Saint Francis also gave support to Conde San Xavier: " The clergy of this city informed you of the decline of the ecclesiastical incomes of this bishopric due to the prohibition of the marketing of cocoa and the low prices which were received locally for this product at that time. (Caracas, December 23th of 1744). (18) The General Procurator of the city also expressed his opinion about the problems caused by the monopoly of the cocoa trade given to the *Guipuzcoana* Company. " We beg you to receive the petitions of Conde San Xavier, because they are necessary for improving the conditions of the inhabitants of the province of Venezuela." (19) In the same document the Procurator pointed out the inconvenience the prohibitions imposed and he spoke about the war with the English which had caused much damage. Because there were no facilities for shipping the cocoa, its price had declined and so the people had no incentive to take care of the harvest.The businessmen -rather than the harvesters , who did all the hard work- therefore received all benefits. (Caracas, 11 December 1744).(20) These are only a few examples of the documents dealing with this subject: the important point is the intimate relationship between economic power and the Church in colonial times, and also to indicate the length of time it took decisions in the province of Venezuela.

Conflicts Within the Church

Within the Church itself prevailed the decentralization and factionalism characteristic of Venezuelan society. The institution was not able to control its own organization. Throughout Spanish colonial church history there were, indeed, bitter conflicts between the

regular and secular clergy, but in Venezuela divisions occurred frequently within the separate orders and between the units of secular organization. Such dissensions naturally lessened the political and social effectiveness of the institution. The relative neglect of this region by Spain and the poverty of Venezuela affected the church adversely; its personnel was always inadequate and its wealth was never equal to that of the church of México, Peru, or even Colombia. However, these conditions did not prevent the church in Venezuela from being the most effective civilizing agent throughout the colonial period.

In the 18th century there were many dissensions in the orders and rebellions against the authority of the provincials. These institutions could serve as an example of the individualism and decentralization of Venezuelan society. "This lack of unity could be observed in the division of the clergy in the War for Independence. On the other hand this resistance to superiors should not be taken to suggest opposition to royal authority or to royal patronage, in principle. The regular clergy, like the secular, was regarded as a primary support of royal power in America." (21)

By the end of the colonial period the ecclesiastical organization presents the same complexity as that of the political and judicial powers, which were characterized by a lack of unity throughout their administration. Only in 1803 was the ecclesiastical jurisdiction unified under the Archbishopric of Caracas, created in that year.

In no other division of the Spanish Empire was there such a lack of integration. The secular clergy served the Spanish population and the Indians and from early on Caracas became the centre of secular organization. However the first bishopric was created in Coro and only transferred to Caracas in 1636, due to the attacks suffered by Coro from foreigners. Its Church was sacked by the English in 1567 and later by the Dutch. Another reason for the location of the ecclesiastical authorities in Caracas was the importance acquired by this city as the centre of political jurisdiction and of the Spanish population, containing thus a large number of priests. The activity of the secular clergy was concentrated in the province of Caracas. Bishop Martí reported a visit to 228 churches, 16 convents and 188 confraternities in the dioceses of Caracas in the years 1771-1784. Many curacies in other parts of Venezuela, which were not under control of the missions, were served by the regular clergy. This practice produced much friction between the regular and secular

institutions. Arcaya speaking about the episcopate in Colonial Venezuela said : "In the 16th century and almost as late as the middle of the 17th., royal power was less effective in maintaining order than that of the church. It was therefore exclusively through the influence of the church that the habits of civilized life could be implanted in the country. They have " to assume a sort of dictatorship in order to break up abuses, protect the weak, chastise iniquity and ,finally, to lay the foundations of a society inspired by justice and not by brute force..."(22) The Bishops were in conflict with the *encomenderos* . (The owner of the *encomiendas*). It was a battle of civil and ecclesiastical powers , in which the civil gained predominance.

The Church suffered a complete subordination to the State when it could no longer be protected by the Spanish Kings. But the opposition between civil and religious activities was not always the pattern. Bishop Diego Antonio Diez de Madroñero (1757-1769), for example, allied himself with the governor, Solano. No ecclesiastic had exercised such an influence over Caracas, and he converted the city into a convent. His prestige became such that he could destroy the cherished carnival with its crude games and pagan dances and substitute for it a procession of the rosary. Although absorption in religious rites reached its height in this episcopate, Rojas's picture of colonial life,(23)and the observations of Depons indicated the prominence of religious activities throughout the colonial period (24). But "this should not be taken as an indication of a deep-rooted or fanatical hold of the church on society" (25)

This apparent extreme religiosity may be attributed not only to the strong influence of Diez de Madroñero but also to a considerable extent to a desire for distraction on the part of an isolated group and to a love of the display and ceremony to be enjoyed in processions, baptisms, burials and other rites. "An illustration of this continuing desire for distraction display and ceremony is the fact that when Madroñero died, Caracas forgot the procession of the rosary , and the pagan carnival was restored." (26) The instability of the position of the church was accentuated in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by the influence of the liberal philosophy of Europe. This fact began to undermine the intellectual predominance of the church long before the end of the colonial period. There had always been contacts with foreigners along the coast but in general the church feared and attempted to guard

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against them. Some bishops were leaders in opposing contraband trade but their opposition was surely to protect institutional monopoly. Humboldt made an interesting observation, when he visited the Cumaná city in Venezuela in 1804, he found the Franciscans open minded in their attitude to foreigners and eager for knowledge of scientific developments in Europe. In addition, the fear felt by the church is indicated by the report of Bishop Martí (1771-1784), who spoke occasionally of heterodoxy in the church, but of a heterodoxy attributed to ignorance and to a mixture of Catholic ceremonial with Indian customs. He referred to the "Indianization" of the church, especially in the interior and isolated places, which he would correct. By contrast, Humboldt declared that outside Havana, civilization had assumed a more European face in Venezuela than in any other part of América (27). Although social and intellectual life had formerly centred around the church, the appearance of literary circles such as that of Ustariz (a man, who belonged to the high class in colonial times: the group called *criollos mantuanos*) indicate intellectual expansion outside the church. In the late colonial period power of the church was, thus, considerably weakened.

However, the revolutionary government, when it came, had to deal with an institution which retained influence over the minds of the people, and interference with some of the privileges associated with the church could have caused a revolt against the political power base. "Bolivar was, therefore, very careful in his relationship with the Church: the liberals once accused him of being more Catholic than they thought. However Bolívar had himself experienced the power of the Church over people, in the earthquake of 1812, when priests told people that the earthquake was a punishment of God because of the revolution made against the Spanish crown. He did not want to deal with any more problems, which could have been an obstacle to the Independence Movement. On the other hand, he thought that there was positive advantage to be gained in securing the active support of the church in the defence of the new order." (28) Bolivar said in a famous statement: that "he feared peace more than war; he feared the social disorder and the possible anarchy that would follow the disbanding armies long accustomed to military life." (29) For assistance in the social reconstruction Bolivar looked to the Church. There was no attack on the privileges of the Church. The definition of the place of the

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church in the state was delayed for a more convenient day. The delay and apparent concessions to its former privileges gave the Church hope, however of retaining and even augmenting those privileges under the republican regime.(30) In his external ecclesiastical programme , as well as in his domestic policy , "Bolivar evidenced his conversion to the philosophy of the Spirit of the Laws. A free thinker and a deist, no doubt, in his personal conceptions, as a statesman he appreciated his position as chief of a Catholic people". (31).

No period of Venezuelan politico-ecclesiastical history presents such contradictions as the one between 1830-1848. The conservative oligarchy , allied with a military *caudillo* worked and succeeded in obtaining the separation of Venezuela from the Colombian Union, so one might expect that it would be conservative in ecclesiastical policy. But, in fact it was distinguished by a pronounced liberalism in politics and radicalism in religious policy. Its liberalism, in policy and practice, threatened the position of the church by attacking its special privileges. It was a period of anti-clerical thought.

In the Guzman Blanco period 1870-99 the church lost the majority of its privileges. The church had gained something perhaps in institutional discipline through closer contact with the Papacy, whose representation has been constant in Venezuela since 1876. But this contact has involved no relaxation in the strict surveillance by the State under the Law of Patronage. This instrument has remained the most stable political instrument in Venezuela until today.

Chuao and the Church

After this general background we come back to Chuao, with the purpose of examining the documentation and trying to determine what importance, historically, the town of Chuao had for the Church.

Documentary sources for this section are those of the **Obra Pia of Chuao**, preserved in the archives of the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas. The three documentary collections in the Archdiocese of Caracas:the Appendices to Parishes, Accounts, and Confraternities. These were identified by folders numbered 52, 60, 154, 155, and 252. Documents for the following years were examined: 1702, 1705, 1730, 1750-51, 1758, 1766, 1778, 1784, 1798, 1804, 1811, 1844, 1878, and 1889. The documents of the

years 1878, 1889, and 1892 refer to Puerto Colombia and Choroni. Chuao is not mentioned at all.

Although this revision has given on some interesting information, it is regrettable that the archives were found to be in deplorable condition. Aside from the fact that the documents are still not systematically classified, they are only available to researchers for the space of two hours a day, all of which makes their study most difficult. Many of the documents identified as pertinent to this research project were found to be in a seriously deteriorated condition, practically ruined, and hence illegible.

In order to complete this account, oral sources will also be used, in an attempt to elucidate two principal issues: the official attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards popular religious celebrations and the opinions held by the people of Chuao regarding the Church's activities in relation to these manifestations.

The Catholic obligation

The writ of *encomienda* (see **Chuao: Some Historical Data** note Nº 16) granted to Cristobal Mexía de Avila in 1591, establishes the obligatory nature of instruction in the Catholic faith. The document fulfils one of the precepts of the Spanish conquest, for possession of the new territories was taken in the name of the King and for the implantation of the Catholic faith. Referring to the Valley of Chuao, the deed reads: "I grant them [the indigenous inhabitants] to you so that you will instruct them in the ways of our holy Catholic faith and as vassals of the King our lord, of which I charge you in conscience. (32)

Doña Catalina and the Church of Chuao

In the last will and testament of Doña Catalina Mexía de Avila, dated 1671, there is a clause in which she asks to be buried in the convent of Saint Francis, in the chapel of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, in Caracas. From the document, a list of saints to whom she was devoted can be drawn up: The Immaculate Conception, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter Apostle, Saint Joseph, Saint Dominic of Guzmán, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Catherine, and our Lady of Solitude. Furthermore, in the inventory of her assets, there is an item that refers to a licence for 'the church of the Blacks' (her slaves) of the Valley of Chuao. This is the first mention made of

a desire to build a church, from which it can be deduced that no church existed at the time the will was drawn up.

The documents attest to the existence of patrons of the *Obra Pía* of Chuao whose status as such had been granted in perpetuity. Within the information found in the records, monetary provisions were always made for Doña Catalina's dispositions: masses which had to be offered, and dowries for the convent of the Mothers of the Conception (a religious organization which disappeared at the end of the 19th century, by order of Guzmán Blanco, Liberal President of Venezuela.)

In documents for the years 1750-51, reference is made to the vagrants who lived in Chuao, and the measures which would have to be taken to deal with them. Among the solutions proposed was removing all the important religious images from the church and in addition, "...putting an end to the town, due to the state of corruption of its people, who are always in a state of drunkenness." (33) The solution was carried out and the town was demolished. (34)

This destruction reveals that the provision of Doña Catalina's testament was obviously carried out, but destroyed as already mentioned. Probably a new decision was taken, given a document of the year 1771, in which the building of a new church is set down: "...since the first one, made of cane and adobe, with straw roofs, is ruined." It is stated that the new structure should be built out of rough stone and mortar, and payment for its construction was to be made with the product of the plantation. It was also decided to use the design of Monsignor Santiago de Rojas, and to name the current master or patron of the *Obra Pía*, Don Francisco de Tovar, "...in charge of all the corresponding accounts." (35)

Mariano Martí's visit to Chuao

The pastoral visit in 1772 of Bishop Mariano Martí to Chuao tells that the church had been not yet been built: "...a town of Indians whose church [has been] burned and demolished." No specific causes are mentioned. Due to this state of affairs, "...the population has been added to the parish of Choroní...the Chuao parish was left with an oratory or public chapel, for the spiritual succour of its inhabitants, [but since] it was then much deteriorated, leaving the inhabitants without spiritual assistance...I command the "*patronos*" (those in charge) of the *Obra Pía* of Chuao to build a decent and able oratory within two months, and to find an approved and capable

priest, who in the capacity of lieutenant of the curacy of Choroni would provide the sacraments..." In conjunction with the pastoral visit, a register of slaves was compiled, so as to determine their spiritual needs, and the Valleys of Chuao and Zepe (Zepecurinare) were separated from the town of Choroni "...and were incorporated as a distinct parish...[and]...this was done in July of 1778."(36)

The provision for the year 1778 was to dismantle the old church, and the construction and endowment of the new church in Chuao. Mention is made too, of the conclusion of the sacristy, the naming of the Chaplain and the need to supply the religious images of the Most Holy Virgin, Saint John, and Christ, with adequate clothing. The Chaplain complains of the great difficulties in reaching Chuao, for there are no passable roads. Once again, emphasis is put on the inaccessibility of the place: its only access is by sea, navigation is dangerous, the mountains are impassable. The continuing construction of the chapel is described, and reference is made to the inhabitants as "...those sad and miserable slaves...." The images found in the church are listed: "...the Conception, the Christ, and a Saint John carved in wood...." (37)

That same year, the construction of the church was delayed by the rains. For this reason, the man in charge of the plantation asked the patrons for authorisation to fix up a portion of the church "...so as to be able to celebrate a mass on the first day of Saint John, without any more disbursement than the one hundred pesos..."(38)

This is important because it indicates that the feast of St. John was already being celebrated in Chuao at the time. It lends credence to what has been conserved in the oral tradition regarding Doña Catalina's promotion of the cult of St. John.

Document N° 148, 1812, contains a report made by the provisional priest of Chuao about the damage suffered by the church due to the earthquake. He gives an account of the events of day 26 of that year and the decisions he has taken: "...I have extracted the images from there and have set up an altar in the corridor of the priest's house..." (39).

A separate chapter of an 1825 document is dedicated to the "...Holy Church of the plantation. A church of rough-hewn stone and mortar, finished in clean plaster, covered with [roof] tiles, having one nave, which will measure twenty-four and one-third "varas" in length...[vara = approximately 33 inches] including the presbytery, which measures seven varas in width...the height of the body of the

church is of eight and one-third varas and the presbytery twelve, with its two tall windows on the sides, only one of them with lattice..."(40)

The description continues in this way, describing an altar in stone and mortar on which is found an image of Our Lady of the Conception, two altars with their tables, two pilasters which serve as basins for holy water, and a sacristy.

The treasures of the Chuao Church

In 1825, a detailed list records the silver altar furnishings in the church of Chuao, the ornaments and a list of religious images, among them that of Saint John the Baptist.

The description indicates the care lavished on the church, as well as the valuable items and religious jewels in its possession.(41) The majority of these have disappeared today, probably stolen. According to an informant, part of the treasure of the church of Chuao was removed by the priests themselves. A portion was sent to the cathedral in Caracas and the location of the remainder is unknown. Although no actual proof has been found of this account, there is a ring of truth about it, because similar sequences of events have been recorded in other Colonial parishes. Of the colonial religious images which survived the ransacking at the end of the time of the Dictator Gomez, the church of Chuao still displays the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Solitude, Saint Nicholas of Bari and a Crucifix (used in the Corpus festivity). People said the image of St. John the Baptist was brought to Chuao by Damiana, in ancient times. In recent years María Tecla is now in charge of the religious images and the treasures of the church of Chuao. Among them *are* the *ara* (the altar stone, which is from colonial time), two silver vases made in England (apparently Victorian, but now in very bad condition), two ancient mass books some ancient priest's vestments and eight embroidered table covers.

Speaking about the religious images from the church of Chuao, Augusta said: " At the time of Pérez Jiménez, Father Vasquez was here, and he was impressed by the beauty of the saints (religious images) of Chuao. He told me that when I needed to repair any of them, I shouldn't give them to anybody, but bring the person here to repair any damage. How these saints came here I don't know: I only know that the Virgin of Mount Carmel, and the Virgin of Coromoto and some others I don't remember now were bought by

their societies. (Chuao organisations)" But María Tecla said: " I think that this is the great treasure Doña Catalina gave to all Chuaños (people of Chuao), the Cross, for example, is very ancient. It came from the time of slavery as did Our lady of Solitude. The Immaculate Conception and the Nazareno were bought by their societies, by their slaves. The Virgin of Paint was brought by María Casilda Bolívar de Liendo and her people at the beginning of the 20th. century." (42) Augusta continued: " The church of Chuao had a plaque stating the year it was built, around 1920. This appeared to be in the place where some person, probably a priest was buried. María Tecla added: "look my love where the niche of St. John is, it was the belfry, and the decoration was only 'calaverna" (skulls) (1985 ; 1989)

Priests problems

Finding a priest, who wanted to go to Chuao was a very difficult task. For example, in a letter dated 1758, written by Juan Manuel de Herrera, the administrator of the plantation, asks that a priest has to be sent to Chuao to administer the sacraments, because "...for a long time...Chuao and Zepe have not received a visit from any priest at all". (43)

Among the accounts of expenditure for the year 1775, an item reads: "To the owner of the canoe in which the priest of Chuao hears the confession of Dorotea...", which points to the fact that there was no priest permanently assigned to the cocoa plantation, as had been ordered by Bishop Martí. (Neither, in former times nor nowadays, does any priest live in Chuao. He would come from Choroní, Turmero or Maracay to attend to the people of Chuao on some feast days only)

In 1776, the decision was made to take the slaves of Chuao to the town of Choroní for confession, as they had not had the sacrament for over two years . This serves to indicate how negligent the authorities had become regarding the religious life of the slaves; but the trips were then suspended due to the smallpox epidemic which broke out in the zone.

In 1795, a roster of slaves who received papal bulls special privileges or dispensations, was set down, the number being one hundred and ninety. (44)

The content of the documents of the year 1798 centres around the search for a priest to take charge of the curacy of Chuao, for the post was still vacant. The petition was drawn up by Don

Tomás Sosa, the the last one to occupy the position. A convocation was arranged to choose a candidate but there was only one a certain, Don Andrés Vásquez, a priest. He fulfilled the requisites established by the Council of Trent: "...the presentation of the necessary authentic documents which certify his fitness to be a priest of souls; and those who are not priests, must also give proof of their "cleanliness of blood" (racial purity) of studies, and of a good life and sound customs." (45) The document also records the petition for funds made by Andrés Vásquez in order to make the trip from La Guaira to Chuao, which serves as a proof of the difficulty of access. Moreover no priest wanted to go to Chuao because it was a parish of slaves, who could not contribute to the expenditure of the church. These events exemplified the difficulties of finding priests to go there.(46)

In the report of expenses for the year 1806, one finds: "...paid to the priest of Chuao for the feasts of Saint Nicholas of Bari and the Conception, patrons of that church." In fact, an account of expenses can be found every year for the celebration of these two festivities, as well as for the cost of commemorating the feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

In 1811, the Archbishop of Caracas, Narciso Coll y Prat, was searching for a priest for the curacy of Chuao. This was done because Don Andrés Vásquez had died, an event announced by Manuel Ayala, the territorial judge in command. Pending a solution to the situation, a provisional priest, Bartolomé González, was named.

A letter from Domingo de Confides, provisional priest of the Parish of Saint Claire of Choroní, informs José Figueras, principal administrator of Chuao, of the following: "...that having, by superior order, come over to Chuao, and in the days that I remained here, having observed that the purpose of the *Obra Pía* is not fulfilled, as regards the emoluments assigned to the priest who serves it, do hereby declare that from now on I will not give any services at all to that Parish of the Virgin of Solitude, nor to the Valley of Zepe." (47)

The oral tradition versus the official church

Whereas most of the documentation on the Church and development of Chuao has come from official sources, it is interesting to look at the role of the church as seen by the people of Chuao. On this particular issue Augusta Chávez, Francisco Planchez and María Tecla Herrera spoke freely.

In November 1989 Augusta talked about the priests who had worked and were still working in Chuao. She remembered some priests: "Martín Pesa, Trino Jesús, Martín Rey, Pascual Loza, Father Velázquez, Father Grillo, and now Father Ignacio, but also Father Victor. I remember Father Loza, very well his name was Loza Bondad, he was Italian and Augustinian. He defended the church of Chuao, when the government wanted to put a cheap roof (tejalit) to the church. He even went to Caracas and after a long battle succeeded.

I asked her if Father Loza used to live in Chuao and she answered: "No. He used to live in Choróni. All the priests who have come to Chuao lived in Choróni, never in Chuao. Father Loza liked to teach the children, he came to Chuao, every week to do that. He was also a musician and loved to play the harmonium. He was deaf, so to talk with him was difficult; you had to shout all the time. He was a very, very good priest, though, we loved him. And Father Grillo, he was also very good. He used to come to Chuao until three years ago. If you needed a Mass, he would come straight away. He did not mind if the people of Chuao could not go to bring him, he took any boat and walked to the town. Nobody had to have a boat to carry him and nor even a car to bring him to town. He said: "Jesus Christ walked much more than me." He was Italian and he had a very strange last name. I never learnt it. His name was Igiglio but we called him Grillo and also "Guarapita", (name of a Venezuelan rum drink) because he liked to drink it. I don't know what order he was, he dressed in a white cassock. He was good with us. When Don Venó died, (Venancio Bolívar) somebody told him in Maracay, so he came immediately to Chuao, and arrived wet through because of the heavy rain we had that day. He always said to us: "I will be ready to come here any time you need me."

Nowadays, Father Humberto is in charge of Chuao but he is arrogant. He's very young and doesn't much like to come to Chuao. He started very well, taking care of Chuao, but his interest lasted for a very short time. I don't know if he became so indifferent because we didn't accept the way he tried to change our customs. Once, he came to Chuao very late for the festival of the Immaculate Conception. We were waiting for him, with everything ready, from early in the morning. The children were dressed very beautifully waiting for him to give the first Communion. He knew that, but he arrived in Chuao at 2 o'clock intending to hold two masses one after

another, to celebrate at the same time the first communion Mass and the Immaculate Conception. But we didn't permit this, because we're accustomed to having the first Mass at ten, and the second one at six in the afternoon. He wanted to do everything very quickly to leave Chuao early. I told him that we had always paid for his services, so when we didn't like things, we had the right to say so.

We also had a problem with one of the Bishops, because **Elite** magazine, published an article about the festival of Saint John in Chuao, and for this reason the Bishop sent Father Pascual to tell me that we couldn't use the church any more, and he wanted to have the key. The church could only be used when a priest came to Chuao. In the magazine a journalist said that the blacks of Chuao bathe the Saint in rum. They also said we pushed the Saint from one side to another, when really we danced *Sanguero* with him. And they added that afterwards they started to dance with drums in front of the Saint. All these things were lies. When have I seen the Saint bathed in rum or anyone dancing drums in his presence? Never have I seen that. The journalist also added that in Corpus Christi a sorcerer asked for alms. This sorcerer was Don Venó. Just imagine, what kind of wrong information they put in the magazine. But, I was very upset with the orders of the Bishop, and asked Father Pascual to tell him that we had the church key and we the people of Chuao didn't know any Bishop, particularly him, because he had never had the kindness to come here to visit this parish church. Also he didn't know how the church survived, because we didn't receive any help from the Church. Tell him also, I said, that he can keep the key, but it is not a problem for us. You can take the key with you, and I will immediately break the padlock to get in. And I'll tell you this, too: you tell the Bishop that the church authority has the duty of taking care of people, but he never did. Another thing: he doesn't know how we maintain the cult of the Virgin or any saints here, so he has no right to give us any orders without first coming here and making an investigation to check the news he has read. I'm telling you one more time that I'm going to open the church door after you leave Chuao, because a closed temple in a small town is like opening hell, in case you didn't know. What do we want to have a closed church for?. The church is the first house of the town, so can't we have a place we can go to and say our prayers? Father Pascual answered: Augusta I understand your point of view, I'll tell the Bishop. Then I told Pascual: tell the Bishop that he can come himself to close the

church and take the keys, and then we'll open it again, because only we know how the church is maintained. He doesn't even know who built this church, because he has never been interested enough to come here to see his parishioners. I tell you, Carmen Elena, I was very upset."

In relation to what had happened in the end, Augusta said: "After the visit of Father Pascual, everything was quiet. We haven't heard any more about this problem. It happened some years ago, in the time of President Rafael Caldera (the Social Christian Party leader). Two or three years ago, Bishop Henríquez Andueza came here to give the Confirmation. In the time of Bishop Henríquez one young priest used to come to Chuao, but he couldn't stay long, as he had problems with his superior. He heard confession and gave communion to the people of Chuao who lived in concubinage. Then he was transferred to another part of the country, but I think if we asked for him, he would probably come. Father Humberto, the principal of the curacy of Maracay, told me at this time: "I think you don't love me", I said to him you'll be the first priest the people of Chuao don't love, because I think the only ones in Venezuela who still believe in priests are the people of Chuao. " (1989)

Father Ignacio is now with us, and he is working much harder for the community than he did. At the beginning of our relationship we had some problems, but now we're getting on very well. I help him when he needs me and vice versa. For example, last month he had a group of young boys and girls in his house in Uraca, and they were going to Cepe, when somebody called him to perform the ceremony for someone who had died the night before in Choroní. He asked me to take care of this problem and lead the ceremony and the prayers, because he could not leave the group alone. So I went to the church and prayed for the dead person. This family was very glad. They liked very much the way I prayed and sang. They told me some days later that the comments in the community were very good. Some person told them that he wanted to have the privilege of having me perform the prayers and the songs in the church when he died." (Augusta, 1989)

María Tecla remembered one Bishop who went to Chuao in 1927. It was a big event for the town, because nobody remembered having seen a Bishop in Chuao before. María Tecla has only known two Bishops in her entire life. Thus the importance of Chuao for the

Church is indicated by the fact that in sixty three years the town has been visited twice by the hierarchy of the Church.

Francisco Planchez, when talking about the priests of Chuao, said he liked Father Victor very much, because he was very open-minded in accepting the situation (concubinage) of people of Chuao. Francisco lived outside Chuao for many years, and came back to stay there ten years ago.

Father Ignacio, as already mentioned is a Jesuit priest who lives in Uraca, a small town near Choroní. He works very hard in the area. He rebuilt a house dating from the time of Gomez, in which there was an electric power engine, and this house is used for many things. He lives there and also has rooms and space to hold meetings for special purposes linked to education, research, or religious studies among others. He is a young priest, very well-educated and an anthropologist. He is not formally in charge of the people of Chuao: that belongs to the curacy of Turmero and the priest, who is now responsible for the religious aspects of Chuao is the director of the curacy of Maracay. However, he does not have the time to go to Chuao due to the size of the curacy and also because he does not like to go there very often; probably due to the difficult access. So Ignacio helped him to take care of Choroní, Uraca and other small towns in the same area and eventually of Chuao.

Ignacio Castillo described the historical development of Chuao under the church supervision, although he admits that it is not an area which ^{he} had fully researched.

The Chuao plantation belonged to the Interdiocesan Seminary of Caracas until it was transferred to the Central University of Venezuela. It was put under control of the priests of the Seminary, or the Archdiocese of Caracas, until the time of Independence. This effective control of the church lasted until the Guzmán Blanco period and the Seminary had responsibility for the slaves of Chuao. In ecclesiastical territory, Chuao is part of the Parish of Turmero, which is also the political and civil head of the Chuao area. The parish of Turmero was looked after by the secular clergy until a relatively short time ago. However because communication with Chuao is easier from Choroní, the care of Chuao has several times been undertaken from Choroní and that is still so today. Chuao was looked after by the Franciscans until ten years ago, and it had been in their charge for many years. This impression of Chuao is that it had not been looked after constantly and systematically by the traditional

church and the clergy since the plantation was taken away from the hands of the Seminary. He also pointed out that Chuao's neglect was not unique but more dramatic because of its isolation from the rest of the main administrative centres. Ignacio Castillo believes that the religious festivals have continued only by the diligence of a few and in particular women who he describes as 'catechists'. He points out that in Venezuelan society in general, women play a very significant role in religious activities. They take control of the transmission of behaviour and socialization of children as well as the religious and moral standards of the community. He also refers to the subordination of women in other areas of society and the effect of the anti-clerical wave, which characterized Venezuela for a long period of time. In Chuao, he sites María Tecla, the leader and Augusta as the powerful new generation whom he believes will continue the religious education of the community. He is eloquent on the varied attitudes of the Institutional Church on the popular manifestation. He says: "The mingling of different cultures and superimposition of different cultural elements is sometimes seen by the traditional church as a deviation. I would argue that the history of human cultures and the history of all religions is a history of blending and mutual enrichment. The problem is not the cultural contacts, which are common and natural, but the way these relationships are made. Do they occur, for example, as acts of domination or imposition. I do not believe the popular religious celebrations are a negative influence. Christianity is the result of meetings between the Greek world and the Jewish world: moreover, the Christianity which came to America is the result of a meeting between the 'barbaric' world and Roman Christianity. Spanish Christianity was enriched by the presence of the Jewish world and the Arabs: we thus received in America something which is the result of a process of syncretism. What is known as the Roman officialdom of the Institutional Church is the product of another syncretism.

He also said that it was necessary, "to take into account the way we are approaching the celebration of the 500 years of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America. People are trying to discover in our popular traditions, what is pure and native, either from the Indian or African heritage. This approach to isolate the 'pure' African or the 'pure' Indian elements in the popular manifestations is taking a very simplistic approach to any study of cultures. It seems to me that it would be more useful to face objectively the meaning of

our historical process as a whole . There are traditions which have to do with fecundity rites, which belong to all cultures. They are universal rites which have allowed a symbiosis between African and Spanish traditions."

Ignacio Castillo talks of the social interrelation between men and women which relates to same aspects of the African heritage. However he is categorical on the interpretation of the devils of Corpus Christi, " as simply the manifestation of the African culture rebelling against a dominant Western Christian civilization is undermining the complexities of the subject. The festivity of Corpus came from medieval traditions." He states , "one has to be objective in the evaluation of the cultural elements. Values have to do with the way the community assumes its role in social and religious life. Some traditions only serve to maintain a passive populace; such type of religious practice is a type of alienation, in the sense that in any community there is present a prospect of life and struggle, which I believe is positive and should not be suppressed. These two aspects, the social and the religious, are then not isolated, they appear together, mixed. It is possible to find elements of resignation as well as other elements which are affirmations of life and hope. In this sense the festive aspects of the celebrations of our towns and of most of the central coast of Venezuela are such a strong affirmation of life that the inhabitants of the cities, without having the religious background of the people of the community who celebrate the festivities, are looking just for drums and dancing to go there to seek the excitement and enjoyment of the dancing and drum-playing. These city-dwellers do not have the religious background of the celebrants, but are intuitively drawn to their festivities.

Ignacio Castillo says: " It is easy to criticize atavism, superstitions and magic and to point out negative aspects of our rural communities, but perhaps they are more effective than in the advanced urban areas." Ignacio Castillo admits that he finds popular religious practice a fascinating world, and he believes that the celebrations in Chuao help people to have a real and full life.

He continues that " The Church and the clergy represent only two of the necessary elements for effective religious practice, but are not necessary for everyday life. For example, the villagers themselves sprinkle water on the children because the missionaries taught them to do that, in the absence of a priest. I have attended this water sprinkling in Chuao, they are real baptisms with the words correctly

spoken, but later the children have to be baptized by a priest. Thus they wait for a priest to come and baptize a lot of children together. That is why the children have two godfathers and two godmothers, two of them are from the water baptism and the other two are from the institutional baptism. For the dead the people understand they must have a priest: they therefore ask the priest to hold a Mass. In the great festivities the mass and processions are held to be very important. For example, the people are very happy when the priest comes in Holy Week, because in some ways they feel the cult acquires more significance with his presence. Fortunately, though, they have ways of celebrating anything they have to celebrate, with or without a priest.

Speaking about the Corpus Christi festival and its religious content, Ignacio Castillo said : "I would dare to judge it, but I think the religious content of the festivity is very serious, especially if you see the *ensalmada* , the ritual dressing of the devils. There is a strong religious experience but at the same time a certain kind of religious folkloric pragmatism in the celebration of the festival. This pragmatism is derived from the need to give a special meaning which belongs to them, and to demonstrate their autonomy in religious practice. In the celebration of Corpus Christi the role of the priest is restricted to performing the Eucharist, the sermon and the procession. Augusta, helped by other women, leads the prayers, but the whole festivity is commanded by the Captains. The role of the priest in the celebration of St John the Baptist is limited to the Mass." (Interview. November 1989).

In an informal conversation about the same matter with one of the priests, who belongs to the upper echelons of the hierarchy of the Church in Venezuela, the following was said. At first glance the church is not against the popular festivities because they represent a way of expression of beliefs, but these festivities most of the time, have negative aspects, such as the drinking and some other types of dances performed. So the church will not accept this way of rendering honour to the saints. Thus, the church accepts certain aspects of the people's festivities, but not the drinking and the expression of beliefs with lascivious dances. He talked to me as an authority of the church, but he did not want to express his own feelings about it.

In conclusion, this part related to the Church, It would be worth while recording the recent creation of a new ritual in Chuao,

this serves to demonstrate the vitality of popular religious tradition and manifests the search for divine protection for a new and profitable economic activity, fishing. The various means of subsistence of the town appear to be changing, and since the cocoa harvests already have their divine protection in the cult of St. John, the fishermen of the town have probably felt the need for similar patronage. (Apart from the May Cross, protection of the fishermen was not assigned to any particular saint.) As the activity acquired economic importance, I have observed the phenomenon of the search for divine protection, all of which corresponds with the world-view prevalent in Chuao.

Two figures of the same Virgin (a large one and a smaller one) were enthroned on August 12, 1988. The festivity was sponsored by the Christian Democratic Party, which provided drinks, piñatas, (a type of paper container, traditionally stuffed with candies and toys) and music. The images of the Virgins were placed up the cliff by the principal promoters, a fisherman from Choroní and his counterparts in Chuao. The Catholic Church did not participate. But during 1989, when the festivity was celebrated for the second time, Father Ignacio was present. A mass was celebrated in a boat at sea, during which the fishermen attended in their own skiffs. More than fourteen vessels from Chuao and Choroní participated in the ceremony. Afterwards, all went to the beach where there was dancing to drum rhythms and to jukebox music until dawn.

Berta Aché confirms this information : " We went in the boats; big boats were there: that was very nice. The fishermen did a kind of dance with the boats and then they stopped in front of the cliff, and from there in the boat the priest held the Mass. Afterwards a couple climbed the cliff and threw fireworks from there, then we all sang to the Virgin. When everything was finished we went to Cepe and finally we came back to Chuao. On the beach the owner of the festivity gave a party. There were more than a thousand people from Maracay, Chuao, Turmero, Choroní and Caracas. They spent the whole Sunday, day and night there." (1989)

The point to emphasize is that with the creation of a new ritual, which seeks divine protection for another economic activity, (fishing) popular religious celebrations have become more powerful in Chuao. Political parties provide support for the popular initiative. The Catholic Church, in the person of the priest, participates and establishes a liturgy which will ^{be} attracted ^{to} the creators of the new

ceremony and their followers. Moreover, the fishermen themselves chose to enthrone the figures of the Virgins on the cliff, because,- as they explained once-, when they were coming from the high seas to anchor in the cove at Chuao the sea seemed to hold them back. As they came near the high cliff they had seen up among the rocks, in a sort of cavity, the face of the Virgin.(i.e. Holy Mary, and after that they wanted images to be put there and kept there, to fulfil the wishes of the Virgin.)

Notes

1. Francois Depons. **Voyage to the Eastern part of Tierra Firme**. Vol I,p.6 2.
2. Constantino Bayle. **El clero secular y la evangelización en América**,p.43.
3. Lucas Ayagarray. **La Iglesia en América y la dominación española**, p XXIII.
4. Mary Watters . **A history of the Church in Venezuela**, p.21.
5. **Ibid**, p.21
6. **Ibid**, p.21
7. **Ibid**, p.21
8. Francois Depons. **Op. cit.** Vol 1, p. 239-242
9. Mary Watter. **Op, cit.** p.30
10. Manuel Gutiérrez de Arce. **Op.cit.** p.29
11. **Ibid.** p.43

12. **Ibid.**p. 44.
13. **Ibid.**p.92
14. *Criollos* (Spaniards'sons born in America). In 1749, Rebellion of Juan Fco de León, against the colonial System and the Guipuzcoana Company.
15. **Archivo General de Indias**, Sevilla. Sección 5. Audiencia de Sto. Domingo, Legajo n°786.
16. **Ibid.**
17. **Ibid.**
18. **Ibid**
19. **Ibid**
20. **Ibid**
21. Mary Watter. **Op. cit.**p. 30
22. Pedro Manuel Arcaya. **Estudios de Sociología venezolana.** p.89-90
23. Aristides Rojas. **Leyendas históricas**
24. Francois Depons.**Op. cit.** (see Mary Watters p.45)
25. Rojas, Aristides. **Op.cit.** p.53
26. Carlos Duarte , **Las fiestas de Corpus Christi en la Caracas Hispánica**, p. 68
27. Alejandro de Humboldt, **Personal Narrative to the Equinoccial regions of America, during the years 1794-1804**, Vol III, p. 472.
28. Bolívar clerical's policy was the expression of his realistic conception of politics;he sought in the ecclesiastical as well as in the political constitution to reconcile his liberal philosophic ideals with the facts of Venezuelan social life. There was no attack on the privileges of the church nor positive claim by the state of the right of patronage. The omission from the constitution of a grant of religious toleration was a concession to the sentiment of the country.

It represented no illiberalism in his philosophy, but a temporizing with circumstances." (Watters, Mary. **Op cit.**p 73.)

- 29. **Ibid.** p. 72-73
- 30. **Ibid.**, p. 73
- 32. **Op. cit.**, p. 124.
- 33. **Obra Pía**, Doc. Nº 2, p. 180.
- 35. **Op. cit.** Doc. 16
- 34. "This solution was carried out, for Folder Nº 52 contains an account for July 28, 1751 to the effect that "...the Captain General...has received reports... [concerning a] town in the Valley of Chuao formed of hovels and grass Indian huts [inhabited by] ...vagrants, fugitives from justice, and delinquents of vicious commerce, living in a scandalous manner and licentious concubinage and drunkenness..."Orders were issued to the Guipuzcoana Company* to the effect that the town of Chuao was to be demolished. In the same document is found a description of the town's "...church of straw, a hut, and the beginning of construction of another." The document implies that all the houses were destroyed." **Archidiocesan Archives**. Parishes, Doc. Nº 52
- 35. **Op. cit.** Doc. 87, p. 340-41
- 36. **Op. cit.** Doc. 95, p. 353
- 37. **Op. cit.** Doc. 115, p. 409
- 38. **Op. cit.**, p. 410
- 39. **Op. cit.** p. 504
- 40. **Op. cit.** Doc. Nº 163. p. 575
- 41. **Op. cit.** Doc. 163, p. 576

42. Maria Casilda Bolívar de Liendo, Juan Bautista Liendo's wife, who was the last slave elders remember. See pages... cross reference with María Tecla information.
43. **Archidiocesan Archives.**
44. **Obra Pía**, Doc. N° 56, p. 273
45. **Ibid.** Doc. N° 123, p. 422-24
46. **Archidiocesan Archives**
47. And from the year 1804, one reads: "And responding to the request of SSJ? for a person to take the post of Rector of that church, I say: that there is no person there who can be elected , since that curacy is nothing more than a "repartimiento" (an allotment) of slaves, with no one besides a white overseer, with no responsibility. Besides, due to the fact that there are only slaves of that *Obra Pía*, and they do not pay...that church has no income and always in its need, the parish priests have had to go to the administrators of the aforementioned *Obra Pía*." (Apart from slaves, only the Administrator used to be there, and as we can extract from other documents, at that time the Administrator did not live in Chuao, but only came to supervise. One of 'the mandadores', probably was in charge of the supervision of the work while the Administrator was not there)

The Doctrine of María Tecla

The teaching of the Doctrine in the Spanish America

The Spanish Crown placed a great deal of importance on the teaching of the Doctrine to the Indians in the period of the colonization of the Americas. These are only a few examples of the enormous quantity of documents of the Spanish Crown dealing with religious aspects in the colonization and indoctrination of the populace in the American Empire. These illustrations offer the world view of the Spanish Kings, which was extended to the whole Empire, *El Reino de Indias* .

J. T. Medina 's discussion of the first publication in South America (1) relates how the opening of a printing shop by Antonio Ricardo (2) in 1584 rested on the Royal Audience of Lima, dictating an *auto* (permission) to print the Catechism of the Christian Doctrine. They needed these materials to indoctrinate the Indians in the Catholic faith. Antonio Ricardo was only authorized to do this, in the cloisters of the Jesuit School.

When the Spanish Crown sent **La Real Pragmática de los diez días del año** of Pope Gregory III with the order to publish immediately, throughout the entire Empire, Ricardo had to interrupt the printing of the Catechism, even though it was almost finished. Thus, the first publication issued in South America was **La Real Pragmática de los diez días del año**, dated 17 August 1584, and followed a month later, by the **Catechism of the Doctrine**.

In the 18th century, King Charles III, in a Royal Decree, 21 August 1769, talked about the need to write a commentary on the Catechism of the Doctrine, which strictly followed the Roman Catechism approved by the Council of Trent, "to give the pure and true Doctrine of the Church with uniformity." He also ordered theologians to avoid any other interpretation than the one given by the Council of Trent; and to look very carefully at the versions of the Catechism written in Indian languages. This was a necessity to preserve the spiritual health of the devotees.

The Bishop of Saint Cross (Peru), in following the dispositions of King Charles III dictated this order to his priests : "We, who are in charge of the Christianization of the Indians must teach them the Doctrine, in the Spanish language, so that the Indian can acquire the

language which would make easier the learning of the Doctrine to convert them to real Christians." He also ordered the maintenance of Schools of reading and writing, to increase the numbers of disciples to take care of the more advanced and intelligent students who could, later on, themselves serve as teachers of others. (3)

In other documents the Crown revealed its preoccupation with the number of Indians in the *encomiendas*, (see note 16, p. 16) and with the priests in charge of the Doctrine, and also established the control of the introduction of other beliefs by way of ordering the expulsion from the Americas of all priests, who were not Spanish. (4)

The Doctrine in Chuao

In the **Obra Pía**, it is noted that from the very beginning, the doctrine was given to African slaves as was written in the will of Catalina Mexía de Avila (1671) and as seen through the payments appearing in the accounts of the plantation. (5) The teaching of the Doctrine was obligatory during the time the plantation was controlled by the ecclesiastical Authorities, probably until the end of the war of Independence. However, even when the plantation was transferred to the Universidad de Caracas the teaching of the Doctrine was not interrupted, as we can observe through oral tradition in Chuao, as reported by María Tecla Herrera, the town's most important repository of religious lore.

The Doctrine of María Tecla is thus a compendium of religious knowledge based upon the New Testament and the Tridentine catechism, and provides justification for the festivities of Chuao, including in particular, Corpus Christi.

I have recorded the Doctrine twice, in 1979 and in 1985 and gathered other parts in the talks I have had with María Tecla over the years. The Doctrine is very much an oral tradition, even though deriving from written sources. It was handed down to her and she will expect someone to follow the tradition. This thesis represents the first attempt to retain the doctrine in written form, through it is not my intention to destroy an oral tradition that has as much to do with performance practice as with metaphysical principle. (6)

The 1979 version starts with the Commandments, followed by The Annunciation and other Mysteries of the Incarnation and the Holy Trinity, and then the culmination of the earthly life of Jesus Christ, the Resurrection Sunday. Prayers are recited, some of them Latin litanies, and an account of the life of Jesus Christ on earth, and

the temptation of Jesus Christ by the Devil is given. The commandments feature with explanations of their significance, and in which are incorporated opinions against other beliefs, such as spiritualist and evangelicals. Then follows Ascension Thursday, explanations of the three churches: (i.e. the Church triumphant in heaven, the Church suffering in purgatory, and the Church Militant on earth) and the reasons Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit to earth. The next topic was the Eucharist, together with the performance of the festivity of Corpus Christi in Chuao, in which this Doctrine provides the explanation for many parts of the performance. (7)

In the 1985 version the Doctrine began with an account of Corpus Christi, then the Mysteries of The Annunciation, The Incarnation, The Holy Trinity, the sending of Saint John The Baptist and later the Holy Spirit to earth, then the return of Jesus Christ to earth, and the new temptation of the Devil, The importance of the Virgin Mary , who defeats the Devil, and defends her son, the relevance of the sacrament of the Baptism for Christians, then again an account of Corpus Christi festivity. (8)

The differences between the two versions, are due in general to the fact that oral tradition does not exist as a concise reading and differs according to the different times they were recorded. The first was recorded outside the festivities, and the second at the time of Corpus Christi. (9)

For the purpose of this work, the Doctrine has been transcribed and translated. Where it relates to the Corpus Christi and Saint John the Baptist festivities. It could be said, that the part dedicated to Corpus Christi seems to be much more important than that of Saint John the Baptist, because of the length of one in comparison to the other. This is a combination of the transcription of 1979 and 1985, which were in essence the same, but in which are incorporated songs dedicated to the Most Blessed Sacrament. The 1985 version has an advantage, in that it was more clearly recorded, and María Tecla expressed herself more clearly than in the former version.

The learning of the Doctrine : María Tecla's words.

"The doctrine of Jesus Christ is explained to the children as it was explained to me. Old Juan, (the last slave Juan Bautista Liendo), and María Casilda Bolívar de Liendo, Mercedes Díaz were my guides in the learning of the Doctrine. Mercedes was the daughter of a *manumisa* (freed slave) and she was 21 years when she taught us

children." (1979) (10) In other talks she reaffirmed the above and added that times had changed.

"You know, all these stories were in the big book belonging to the old Juan, the slave. (He gave it to his son Antonio Abad Liendo when he died). You see, when you are poor you don't have the opportunity to learn how to read or write. Old Juan did not know how to read, but he knew the Doctrine by heart. The same happened with María Casilda Bolívar de Liendo and the Yayas, who were manumisas and they taught us in the same way as old Juan did. He used to tell us the whole doctrine by heart. " (1985) (11)

"The Doctrine is very long. To reach the Thursday of Corpus Christi you have to start from the beginning when Joseph went out with Mary to 'Jelusarem (Jerusalem). They were in the *aldea* (town) of Galilee and when they arrived in that part of Israel, where Jelusaren (Jerusalem) is, the porter of all paths, Alexander the Great, told them: 'This is the way you must take to go to Bethlehem to sign the Census of Julius Caesar.'

Mary told Joseph : 'It could not be like this, why does Julius Caesar want to take the poor lands where David was born and brought up?'. But the other said: 'This is the way you must go , if you don't , you will not come to sign the census of Julius Caesar in Bethlehem.' You know, Julius Caesar was the first politician Jesus found in his way. So, Mary arrived with a strong pain in her heart and she and Joseph did not find any place in the town, not up, not down . The Doctrine said that St. Luke was the witness of the place in which Mary gave birth, in a humble place , full of straw.... (1989) (12)

The Resurrection of Jesus and its relation with Corpus Christi festivity

The day of Corpus Christi is the birthday after the resurrection of Christ in which the Holy Spirit came to give the Corpus Christi to the disciples and priests . That is 'so big'. He went to look for all of them who were gathered and he found they were tied to wood because of the devil who willed it. They were condemned to be tied to this wood in Abraham's bosom, then Christ blessed them and gave them the world , and he went to heaven. He said : He who eats my bread is with me, he who does not eat my bread is not with me nor am I with him. Jesus Christ goes with us in the image of the Holy Spirit, you in your faith know that the Saviour is with you." (1985) (13)

She was interrupted and later on she continued speaking , this time about **the importance of alms in the Corpus festivity:**

"The primary thing is the alms, it can happens that, for example, one, who is a Corpus devil dancer would die, then because we know that the soul does not die, the mother, the father, the sister or brother or anyone related to this devil dancer has to give alms in the name of him the day of Corpus Christi." (1985) (14)

A question about the instruments carried by the devils (the rattle) was answered in the following form:

"And to give you the explanation about the instruments carried by the devils and so on I have to tell you the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which has to be with questions, that's the way we learnt the Doctrine.

The Holy Trinity

-Do you believe that the son of God, creator and redeemer of the world is born?

And one answered: Yes I believe.

It was announced?

Yes, Saint John saw it; Saint John the Baptist, (there are many Johns.)

For the grace of the Holy Spirit, Saint John was sent to guide the way of the true Messiah, that is the reason for saying that John was the one who saw the light which shone from heaven to Earth and from Earth to Heaven , and Jehovah sent the Angel Saint Gabriel to announce to Mary.

Where was formed the Son of God?

The Holy Spirit formed in the bowels of the Virgin Mary the body, the soul and the blood of Jesus Christ.

Who formed the son of God in the bowels of the blessed Virgin Mary?

It was formed by the power of the Saint Spirit.

What is the name of the Mystery in which the Holy Spirit formed the body, blood and soul of Jesus Christ?

-It calls the Mystery of the Incarnation

Why is it called the Mystery of Incarnation?

Jehovah sent his divine word , 25 of March, Mystery of Incarnation, because it is one God in three persons , which are the same and at the same time they are different.

And can you believe how the existence of a God in three persons is possible, and what is the difference?

I cannot understand how there can exist one God in three similar and different persons because that is a mystery

What is the name of the mystery, which announces one God with three similar and different persons?

It is called the Mystery of the Holy Trinity

What is the prayer of the Holy Trinity?

(I have asked the priests about the prayer to the Holy Trinity, and, they told me that The Holy Trinity has no prayer)

The Holy Trinity has not got any prayer because the Holy Trinity is Jesus Christ, the conjunction of the three persons.

Is The Holy Trinity a mystery?

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Is the Father God?

Yes, the Father is God

Is the Son, God?

Yes, the son is God

Is the Holy Spirit God?

Yes, The Holy Spirit is God

Are there three Gods?

Yes, there are two Fathers, incense and unction in one true God, in three persons.

And which are these two fathers in incense?

The highness, the purity, the greatness and the honour of Mary and the badge of Death, the badge of everyone who die with the grace of God.

And the two Fathers in incense?

The incense and the myrrh, the purity which Jesus Christ sent fifty days after His resurrection, the Holy Spirit to His disciples."
(1985) (15)

Easter and after

The Doctrine follows on:

"Then, it happened that at 5 o'clock in the morning, where we left the Corpus, Jesus Christ came the day he has completed forty days of his resurrection, on the Earth, because having been resurrected he is still on the Earth as man, looking at the world , then one said:

"Jesus Christ stayed in heaven the Sunday of his resurrection, Jesus Christ went to heaven for hours and some minutes but he was on earth forty days, guiding the world and giving the good his gifts and eternal joys, guiding them on the road to true justice and seeing Jesus Christ resuscitated, glorious, triumphant and joyous. On Tuesday the day of the devil, the devil was trying again to get Jesus Christ's friendship and he didn't obtain it, and then left." (1979) (16)

"To everybody Jesus Christ offered the bread, the day he raised himself to heaven, forty days after his resurrection, every last one of them clamoured for the bread that Jesus Christ had offered them. They were looking at him, after having received the Holy Spirit everywhere they looked and then they went out to clamour for the bread and they found a group everywhere they looked. Then, there... **Jesus Christ again sent John the Baptist to Earth and he gave them to eat the bread that Jesus Christ had offered them.** Everybody has to receive the Baptism with his disciples, confirmation, and confession. They all received these three sacraments, all who searched for Jesus Christ. After they had seen themselves become Christians, they saw Jesus Christ, who was strolling in heaven, from Earth to heaven, and they shouted: Jesus, Jesus, hide yourself, because the enemies are looking for you. And he told them : let them come, because with the cross of redemption they are pushed back from their frontline, with the cross of redemption in the chalice, because they already had the baptism, they were Christians. Then, Jesus asked them, how are the enemies looking for me? The Christians said that devils searched for him in the hills, in the fields, on the roads, and when they told the devils that he was not there, they flung themselves down"(1985). (17)

The third of May

This is the history of Mary. 'This day was signed third of May. How Mary was named by Jesus Christ Mother and Queen of heaven and earth and the whole creation," You are the Queen and the leader of the month of May, because in this month was the saying of peace. There in their discussion, it was on their way that they found each other, only four were going: Jesus, Saint Joseph, Mary and Saint John the Baptist, they were going to cross the mountain of Josaphat, to go and bathe in the river Jordan, on their way there again appeared to them Lucifer, Satan, the king of all Judea, the king of all executioners, that discussion of theirs was long and there the one who proclaimed the peace was Mary, who made the cross with her

arms, Saint Joseph and Saint John the Baptist. Since on 3 May the battle of the devil's day had already taken place, and he had been beaten by Mary. This is precisely the lesson of the third of May, there Jesus tells all the devils, that he is Jesus Christ, his only two words were: in what way and we will see. (1979). (18)

The ascension of Jesus

Then the conflict between Christ and Satan was on Ascension Thursday, the day he was going to rise to heaven." And the day that Jesus Christ went to bring out all the just who were together in the bosom of Abraham, to raise himself to heaven, he found the condemned with the wooden beams on the cross who had been there forty-three days, the just were on his right, the devils called them from far away, they whistled at them, they hurt them, and they were on his right. Jesus Christ left them the world and Jesus Christ told them : he who would eat of my bread is with me and I am with him and he who would not eat of my bread is not with me nor I with him. At six in the morning he descended into hell, he rose up to heaven with all the just at the right hand of God the father, never to die again, not at the end, not in all the centuries, that day is called for all the centuries , Ascension Thursday.(1979) (18) "He raised himself, ten days after having raised himself, which was fifty days after his resurrection, was when he flung (sent) the Holy Spirit to all his disciples who remained on Earth .He sent the Holy Spirit as a vapour (fluido) from heaven to earth." (1985) (19)

Jesus Christ and St. John the Baptist

"Jesus Christ, with the Cross redeemed the world with the blood he lost in the Street of Bitterness. This blood he lost on the Cross, could clean our sins and take away the Devil (Satan) . But the only one, the unique Jesus Christ revealed all the secrets of Heaven to was Saint John the Baptist, and he is the first Minister of Christ, at the right of God in Heaven for all the centuries, and for all the centuries". And I said to the children here in Chuao: Saint John the Baptist was the only one to know all the secrets of Heaven, because Satan Chía who is called the AntiChrist, he comes as a (false) prophet, en false teachers, deceiving people, but they , who believe in Christ, the unique, the only begotten son of Jehovah, was the only one who was sent, creator and redeemer of the world and the day of Corpus Christi . (1979) (20)

The temptation of Satan. Jesus and the Corpus Christi festivity in Chuao

[This part will be looked at carefully because it can throw light on understanding the meaning of the fall of the devils of Chuao, on Wednesday, the eve of Corpus Christi, (see p. 186)

"And the sixty-first day of his resurrection, Satan is still needling him and then Satan dressed himself, because what Satan was coveting was Jehovah's chair to the right of The Father, so he could govern there. He was ambitious, that the throne, the chair where Jesus Christ was going to sit, he had to sit in it, he wanted to be the ruler of Jesus, not Jesus his ruler. His mother was called Nicaica and he became an angel and he rose up as an angel of "quirubi" [for cherubim]."(1985) (21)

The origin of the Corpus Eve and the fall of the devils

The devil could not stand it, tomorrow Wednesday is the birthday, because when Satan wanted to go and take Jesus's place, he could not stand it . Lucifer was conquered in the air and on earth that day and Jesus Christ on heaven and earth. What happened is that when Satan prepared those who were with him to grab the church and sit in the chair to the right of The Father, what he did was fall because he could not stand the fire which came upon him from there to here, he was conquered in the air and on land, in the darkness and on the earth. "

"That was the day that people received baptism and confirmation and Jesus Christ told them come, because with the cross of redemption and the chalice the devils will be driven back directly, in the chalice there is where it unifies, I tell you, my children, it shows the purest blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the consecrated host in the chalice, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Afterwards Jesus told the new Christians **to form a house of repose**. To this place Jesus Christ was to give a salutation because they have saved his Church". (See p. 202)

The devils who were looking for Jesus were **dressed very pretty, except in the colour white**, because they already knew that those Christians had built churches. Then Satan formed armies to occupy their church, so that they would be left with nothing, so that they would be the rulers of the church." **The time which Satan marked was twelve noon**, that is why the last fall of the legions is done at twelve. They, already being Christians, explained to Jesus

how his enemies were looking for him, they told him that the devils were dressed very pretty"

The origin of the mask, the meaning of the colours and the instruments

They carried instruments, they did not name harp, drums, guitars, they carried instruments (rattle) in one hand and a whip in the other. When the new Christians answered the 'real devils' that Jesus Christ was not there, they jumped, jumped, they do not come out dancing, they come out but they do so jumping , and they beat themselves, they jumped, jumped and they flung themselves face down and buried their horns in the earth and their armour shone. That is the lesson of the doctrine. "(1985) (22)

"Then Jesus Christ told them that who ever wanted to belong to him, from that moment on, and attain the glory of his father, the eternal glory, let him dress in the same way, carry a badge on his horns, the badge is white, a white ribbon, yellow and red, but the badge is white among all the others, it is the instrument of the right hand, the adornments, a white badge which is the white handkerchief that they use, because between the bunch of handkerchief they have to put in even just a strip of white, now the one who doesn't want to, can violate this, but those two signals should be the same, on the mask the white badge, they put white on the masks. In relation to the whip *el mandador*, there are some who paint in colour and they put on blue ribbons, but anything white that you see, that is the badge that Satan flees from. He dresses very pretty but he does not use anything white, because they dressed Jesus Christ in white in mockery, and then it was with the white snow that Jesus Christ cleaned us.

Well, this story of Corpus Christi is great, then Jesus Christ told them. I am going to explain to all those who want to be mine, form up wherever you like, and the people who want to be mine, who want to go to eternal glory, let them dress the same, use this badge, without that badge you are in danger. Form a house of repose, because I know that Satan is forming armies to take away your church, because he does not want you to have any church." (1985) (23)

The Corpus day: Thursday. Its importance.

In relation to the Thursday, the day of Corpus Christi, María Tecla said in the Doctrine : "Now at three in the morning, this Thursday, the most responsible of the devils the first captain, calls the devils and gathers all of them, to go to the church while the *cajero* beats the drum, walking through the big streets, not the little ones, calling the devils to go to the church obeying the Captain's order, to celebrate the following: "At five in the morning during that time , the priests came on that birthday, all who have received the Holy Spirit to reach salvation and have already found the pious woman from that era , the women Aguila , Sofia with the little Christian devils praying: Holy Sacrament, sovereign Son of God , living master who art in all the world, mercy, sir, mercy, loving father, mercy, my redeemer, give us peace in this life and salvation in the other. The priests left to give the word to all the princes, all his bishops, and Capucin friars, to all those who believed in Jesus Christ. By the time they got there, at five thirty in the morning, they found the pious woman María Rosario, empress of the angels, María Ernestina, the little Christian devil Felipe in another new mission (in the past the churchyard was always full of the people of Chuao), and those who were going in the early morning found all those women with another mission these had already been found by the bishops, with that mission. 'Omnipotent my God, Jesus Christ, lord of all that has been created, let all the creatures who are in heaven and earth come together with me to adore Jesus Sacramented.'"(1979) (25)

"At six o'clock in the morning which is the birthday of Corpus day, the bells rang alone, the sound played itself alone, they heard that in the air , they heard horns, drums, guitars, harp. All the little Christian devils were looking in the air , and all the bishops and priests, and they saw four angels lowering a table covered with white snow, then the priests sang the *Santus Meus*, that is sung at the hour of the Mass (in the past). When the saint was singing, on the way down the *Santus Meus*, David was the one who came in front playing the harp, to the right of the table, Mary , the mother of Jesus sang and danced, the angels did not put their feet on the ground, but instead all of their aides de camp and priests took the table, they took the heart of the church. All of them received communion, even the little Christian devils and everyone who came to be baptised, to go to confession. Jesus Christ turned over that table which goes

covered with white snow and where Jesus Christ's body goes so that Jesus Christ can give it over to his disciples in the heart of the church, what one calls the Sanctuary, the heart of the Church. (1985) (26)

The importance of the Eucharist

María Tecla gives this part using questions.

"And what is Chaorist (Eucharist)?"

Chaorist is really the body, the blood, the soul, the manhood (virility) of Jesus Christ or of him who makes reference to the bread and the wine.

When was that sacrament dignified?

Jesus Christ dedicated that sacrament to the holy people, the day before his death, the last supper. Jesus Christ united all his apostles and priests and he gave them the power.

How is the bread his body and the wine his blood?

Who united the body? The bread with Jesus Christ's body and the wine in his blood?

God united the bread in the body of Jesus Christ and the wine in his blood in the Holy Mass when the priest announces the words of the consecration.

Why is it a sacrament?

For three reasons: The first reason, Jesus Christ crucified all his strength, all his body, all his dignity, he sacrificed his soul to God, his Father. The second reason: to be food for our souls in communion. The third reason: to remain within us and us within him, to believe the others in communion, what their parents believe. It is the bread that the devil offered him forty days after his resurrection. Forty days after Jesus Christ's resurrection, he gave us the payment he had offered us; sixty-two days after his glorious, joyous and triumphant resurrection, twenty-one days after he rose up to heaven, all human beings clamoured for the bread Jesus Christ has offered. **Saint John the Baptist answered them: to receive, to eat the bread offered by Jesus Christ, all need to receive baptism, confirmation, confession.**(1985) (27)

"After all had received their first communion, Jesus Christ in his spirit asked them what was the greatest day for us, the day of birth, the day of baptism, the day of the first communion ?

One's answer is: the day of the first communion.

Why ?

Because of the grace and we clean the sins of the world with the body of Jesus Christ in the consecrated host.

And how is that day called?

That day is called Body of Christ [in Spanish "Cuerpo de Cristo"], who came down in a sacred mass with music and happiness. Jesus Christ answered them: This day for all the centuries and all the ends is Thursday of Corpus. There is where Corpus Christi comes from".(1985) (28)

Corpus Christi and its relation with the Baptism

"The Corpus is really the body, the soul, the blood of Jesus Christ, the divinity and species of references of the bread and the wine. Before going and afterward, Jesus Christ said: all the children who are born from this day on have to be baptised at the time of their birth because they are born with the devil due to the sin inherited from Adam. All the Christians asked, and who baptises, if there's no priest? Anyone can baptise, but added, if she be an adult, she can baptise. One takes a glass of clean water and if it is a running river, much better, at the same time you pour the water on the three month-old child's head, with the sign of the cross, saying thus: I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. First one says for him the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Hail, Holy Queen, I believe in God the Father, and the child is baptised, that is the Corpus" (1985) (29) (See Priest Castillo interview, p.127)

Augusta Chávez and the Doctrine

Augusta Chávez the most likely person to take on the role of giving the doctrine on María Tecla's death, learnt the Doctrine from her grandmother Serapia Liendo, who was one of the oldest and most respected women of the community, but *she has* also consulted

María Tecla, on some aspects she does not remember. As María Tecla is getting old, and each year she gives more responsibility to other women but in particular to Augusta.

In Augusta 's words here is a fragment of the doctrine on the fall of the devils: "The sign of the Cross, in that Cross (she is referring to the Cross of Forgiveness) the devils do an homage to the cross. They can come into the church because they are representing ancient times, when Herod Antipas lived, because the first world on the Earth was a world of savagery. Now what really happened is that Jesus Christ had to come down to Earth, really to separate the good

people who were left from the people who were bad. There was such savagery that people did not know who was their mother, son, father or anything. Christ took it upon himself to come against the will of the Eternal because if he came down to Earth, they were going to kill him, the Eternal Father told him. Before there were hordes of devils and Jesus Christ came down to separate the good ones from the bad, then that is what exists in the story of Corpus Christi , then the religion of this place is practised in this way, then they went after Christ, the ones who were good, the good devils who were more or less, they wanted to separate, not follow this way, they did it because of a duty because they were dominated by Herod, but Jesus Christ realized that they had good hearts, that they could repent their deeds and follow goodness. This is where they then go towards Christ, so that Christ will forgive them, that is what they are looking for, forgiveness. To Jesus Christ they make this likeness with that time before the devils can enter because they are already repentant devils, who already repented from evil and they are looking for Christ so that Christ will forgive them, that is why they lie down like that, there, that is where repentance is, and that they are asking for forgiveness, they lie down on the ground that is what is happening. No one in other parts of Venezuela does the same as we here. No other devils except the Chuao devils wake up at five o'clock in the morning , before, it was at 4 o'clock, they must be in the street very early in the morning. because we have the belief, that on Thursday the day of Corpus 'the Malign' (the Devil) is untied, because the Corpus day the Devil has permission to go into the town, then if he finds the town alone he possesses the town, but if the Christian devils are in the streets he can not enter, because there are many devils who possessed the town, just the places through which he would go. (1985) (30)

María Tecla's further comments

"Jesus Christ redeemed the World with the blood he threw on the Street of Bitterness, with this blood he cleans us from sins and he cleans us from the devil. **And the only Saint in the world, in the resurrection of Christ, to whom God revealed all the secrets of Heaven was Saint John the Baptist, he is the only one who knows everything. He is the first Minister of Christ, who stays in the right of the Father for ever and ever.** This I say to the kids, because they have to be prepared against Satan Chia the AntiChrist, he comes as a false

prophet deceiving people. Now, those who believe in Christ ,(who is the only one, the one who God sent to earth, the Redeemer of the world),those who are Christians must use the sign of the cross to defend themselves against Satan. Everybody must have a cross in the house, so it is protected against the devil. No devil enters a house, which has a cross, because on a cross like this Christ was killed and he was reborn from it. I complied with my mission , Christ knows that I gave my faith to my sons, my grandsons, my nephews and nieces . The problems are these children, whose mothers don't teach anything about Christ , so, anyone who comes and talks about Sodom and Gomorra, and "Nobuconosor (Nebuchadnezzar) and other bibles, which talked about many gods are accepted... I complied with my duty and nobody who doesn't use the cross, can tell me that he or she is Christian. **Christian is the person who receives the Baptism of Christ, this is the only one who can be called Christian.** Sometimes, I have been very badly treated because I said that, but every day I forgive anyone who would treat me bad, and I will continue saying, I told that last year, and this year, and I am still alive to say my belief to all of them. (1979) (31)

Notes.

1. J. T. Medina. **La primera muestra tipográfica salida de las prensas de América del Sur.**
2. Antonio Ricardo, first typographer of Lima. Peru.
3. **(Charles III.** Disposition of the Bishop of Saint Cross to the priests , after his visit to the towns of the province of Chiquitos, Saint Xavier, august 1778. Perú)

4. **(Royal Cedulaes : 21-5-1767 and 18-10-1767).**
5. **Obra Pía de Chuao, Doc. Nº 17, p.223**
6. In this translation of María Tecla's account, I have tried to keep the essence of her speech, in which formal ecclesiastical words are used in often surprising contexts. I have not altered the repetitious nature or her discourse and have placed my attempts at clarification within brackets)
7. **1979 Version, folder 2.**
8. **1985 Version, folder 25**
9. I will put the two versions in the appendix, I also used some fragments I recorded in different times to illustrate other parts of the Doctrine.
10. **1979, folder 2.**
11. **1985, folder 25.**
12. **1989, folder 2.** She was interrupted here for one of the types of feast, people have in Chuao, after any celebration, where people who came from outside Chuao to the procession were going. (It was the ninth of December.
13. **1985, folder 25**
14. **1985, folder 25.**
15. **1985, folder 25.**
16. **979, folder 2**
17. **Ibid**
18. **Ibid**
19. **1985, folder 25**
20. **Ibid**

- 21. 1979, folder 2**
- 22. 1985, folder 25**
- 23. Ibid**
- 24. Ibid**
- 25. 1979, folder 2**
- 26. 1985, folder 25**
- 27. Ibid**
- 28. Ibid**
- 29. Ibid**
- 30. Ibid**
- 31. 1979, folder 2**

CHAPTER TWO

Corpus Christi

Origin of the festival in Europe and development of popular devotion

Every year, on the 8th Thursday after the Holy week, the Roman Catholic Church celebrates Corpus Christi, in homage to the Most Blessed Sacrament.

According to Christian tradition the festivity of the Most Blessed Sacrament was originated in the city of Liege (Flanders) in or about the year 1230, following the vision of the Blessed Juliana de Monte Conillon. It is said that she saw in the moon the representation of the Catholic Church with a dark spot on one side. The vision was interpreted as a revelation from Jesus on the absence of a specific feast consecrated to honour the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Since then, the feast has been celebrated in that diocese

In 1264 Pope Urban IV issued the bull *Transitorius de Hoc Mundo*, authorizing the celebration of Corpus Christi. To begin with, however, the new festival found some resistance in the Christian community, and so in 1311 Pope Clement V reconfirmed the celebration at the Council of Vienna. Six years later, Pope John XXII corroborated its importance again, and instituted the procession, in which the Most Blessed Sacrament would be taken out from the church in a triumphal manner and indulgences would be offered to the people who participated in the ceremonies of the Corpus Christi festival. Since then, The Corpus Christi has been solemnly kept in all Christendom.

Corpus Christi in Spain

In Spain the celebration spread from 1314 onwards. During the XV and XVI centuries Corpus Christi was a major event of Spanish Catholicism. It was used as a Crusade against the Moors and after the Council of Trent (1545-1563) as a public demonstration of Catholic devotion.

The most famous Corpus Christi festivals are those celebrated in Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, Granada, Toledo, Zaragoza and San Sebastian. There also exists several references to this festival in small towns all over Spain, because of its importance for Catholics.

Julio Caro Baroja (1) said that Bishop Berenguer de Palaciolo instituted the celebration and the Corpus Christi procession in Gerona before 1314. Written sources indicate that the first celebration in Barcelona was probably in the year 1320.

The festivity was celebrated with a procession, which demonstrated the defeat of the devil and sin by the power of the Cross and Christ himself. The procession was led by monsters like creatures representing the devil and sin, running away from the Most Blessed Sacrament. The main monster was in the form of a dragon, *Tarasca*, and was probably based upon the Golden Legend of Jacques de Voragine, in which Saint Martha appeared as miraculously defeating a dragon, which had been devastating the area around the Rodano River in France, very near the town of Tarascon.

Covarrubias in Tesoro de la lengua española defined the dragon as an old serpent, which through the ages has undergone dramatic changes. People said that in some paintings these serpents appeared with wings and feet. On the other hand Covarrubias defined the *Tarasca* as a deformed serpent which was used in some festivities to frighten the children.(2)

The Diccionario de Autoridades defines the monster as: "a serpent figure taken out to lead the Corpus Christi procession, and symbolising its defeat by the power of Sacred Death and Passion of Jesus Christ. The word *Tarasca* comes from a Greek verb *Theraca*, which means: to frighten, because it frightened and discouraged the children from sin." (3)

In Madrid, the first *Tarasca* appeared in the Corpus Christi procession in 1598. It was a gigantic figure of a serpent or dragon made of wood, linen cloth and cardboard, and it was put on a platform carried by several men. Over the *Tarasca* there were other moving figures presided over by a figure of a woman of normal stature, which represented the Babylonian prostitute, a symbol of evil. It is interesting to note that in Grenada, this woman was called Little *Tarasca* and in Toledo *Ana Bolena* . (4)

Occasionally this female figure was replaced by a male child figure, called the little *Tarasca* and dressed as an arab, who went in and out of a Castle, symbolizing the devil's deceit. The presence of this personage was noted in Valencia . The *Tarasca* has a traditional mode of dress which must be adhered to and it is well documented in drawings belonging to the archives of the *Ayuntamiento* (Municipal government) of Madrid. (Plate 16, p 156)

In the 18th century, the *Tarasca* court in Madrid, presided over by the woman and was composed of giants, large headed figures, and horned masked devils. The figures were representative of the conspirators responsible for the death of Christ made of cardboard and wood, and dressed in linen clothes. The masked devils represented the seven deadly sins and they were dressed in a tunic with horns that were made of hand painted cardboard. They danced encircling the *Tarasca* and played music with drums and castanets. The whole dramatic scenario was completed by colourful dancers who jumped and pirouetted between the devils. (5)

In Seville, the Corpus Christi processions between 1790 and 1800 were described as followed: " At a short distance from the beginning of the procession came a group composed of seven gigantic male and female figures very well dressed. The dresses were made by the best tailors and modistes of the city modelling the fashions of Seville for the following year. Under these Giant figures were athletic men, who from time to time amused the public by doing grotesque dances following the rhythms of the drums and of the flutes ." (6)

Religious popular theatre also played a relevant role during this time. Mimes were performed, the performers often entering the throng on a cart, which was used as a stage. The devil was one of the important personages of these allegorical dramas. Big devils appeared in the performance, as horned horrid figures, making outcries, performing frightful dances and epileptic gestures. These performances were held daily until the octave of Corpus Christi.

The most important religious dramas of the Corpus Christi day were performed at the end of the XVI and XVII centuries, when the celebration became more powerful. Authors writing during the "Golden Century" of Spain (7) were commissioned to write plays to

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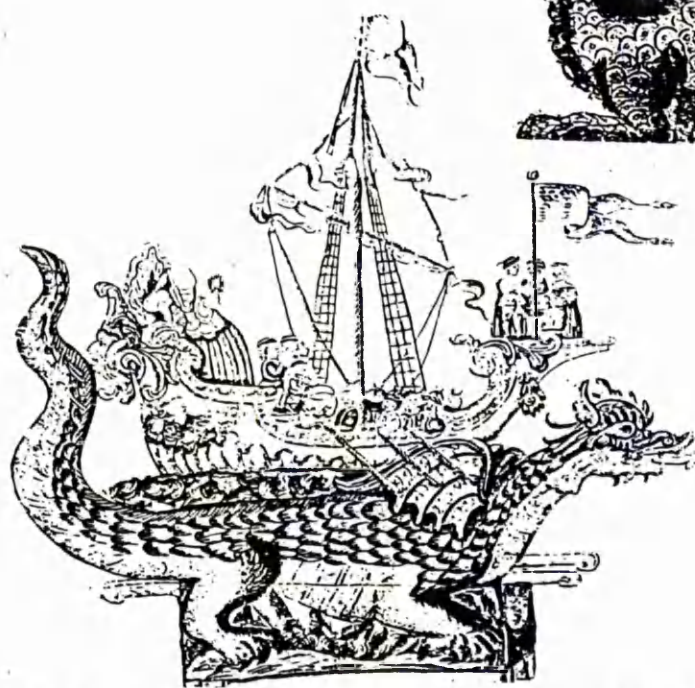
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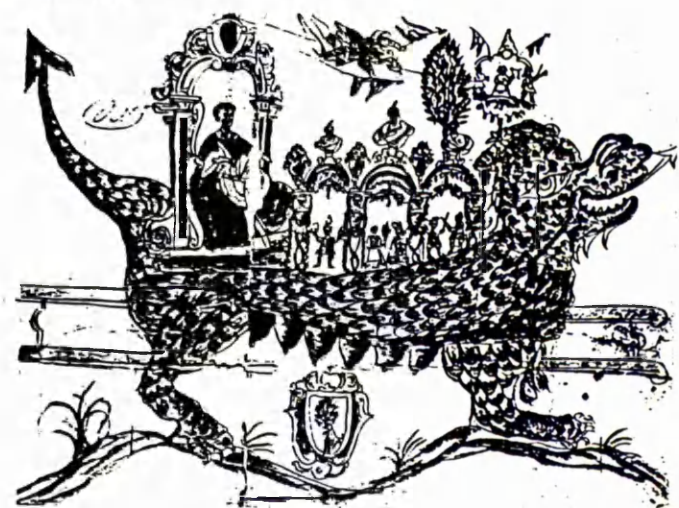


1706



Tarascas de Madrid
 Corpus Christi Festival

1745



1764

be held in the Corpus Christi festivities. Those, such as Lope de Vega, Lope de Rueda and Calderón de la Barca.(8)

Dance was an important element in the celebration of Corpus Christi day. Caro Baroja, said in the words of the people: *No hay Corpus sin danza* which means: It is impossible to have Corpus Christi without dance. Linked with dance was the playing of different instruments like drums and flutes, that were very popular in ancient times.

Normally the Corpus Christi procession started at 9 a.m., inside the church. Then, when the procession went on to the street military, civil and other religious institutions joined it, in accordance with the hierarchy all religious and military orders, Kings and Bishops, marched in the procession following the pallium and the monstrance, containing the sacrament. The streets were decorated with a canopy and the ground covered with flowers. At strategic points such as convents or guilds, neighbours and brotherhoods made some improvised altars, in which the monstrance was left for a while to be honoured by the people. The procession ended at 3 p.m. The Spanish populace, soldiers, members of religious brotherhoods, artisans, merchants, beggars, the young and old, band musicians and street hawkers all were present and celebrating.

During the Middle Ages, brothers and members of Guilds participated in the public festivities, which were very colourful and practically the only social events at that time. The members of the brotherhoods and Guilds belonged to different social groups.

During the XIV and XV centuries and possibly before that, these associations used to celebrate annual banquets on the day of the feast of their Patron Saint. They called each other brothers, and some of their duties were to contribute a certain amount of money to maintain charitable obligations, to participate in religious festivities, to pray in favour of the dead members, to assist at vigils and funerals of the members of the group, to help each other in sorrows, sickness, poverty, and also to take care of the sick.(9)

In Spain and consequently in Latin America the religious Brotherhood and the Guilds, played an important role in the festivities to honour the Most Blessed Sacrament.(10)

These ceremonies were all performed inside churches, until Pope Innocent III, in the Lateran Council of 1215 forbade them,

permitting the dances and music to be performed only outside churches.(11)

In July 1780, in Madrid, Charles the Third, King of Spain promulgated a Royal decree prohibiting the Corpus Christi celebration with "big giants, little giants and *Tarasca*, because all these figures disturbed and debased the cult of the Most Blessed Sacrament causing many indecent acts while on the other hand, they have not been more in use in Rome and other important towns of Europe. They served only to augment the disorder and deviation from the devotion due to the Divine Majesty." (12)

The Corpus Christi procession was thus adapted to the royal order, eliminating the performance of the *autos sacramentales* (Medieval dramas) and other manifestations of the religious theatre. In Madrid the tradition of centuries ended, but the Corpus Christi procession continued to be celebrated as usual in other Spanish cities for more than a century.

Nowadays in Spain the Corpus Christi celebration continues to be very important . Processions of the Monstrance still take place in many Spanish towns, along beautifully adorned streets, preceding the Most Blessed Sacrament. Street decoration includes flowered carpets and arches. The ground is sprinkled with aromatic herbs, such as thyme, sage and rosemary. (13)(Plate 17,p.159)

The conquest of America coincided with the development of the Corpus Christi celebration in Spain, and this tradition, made its way to Latin America through this Conquest in the XVI Century, and consequently to Venezuela.

The festival in Venezuela

In the Province of Venezuela the first reference to the Corpus Christi festivity was in 1582, when the municipal government in Coro (the first city founded by Spaniards in Venezuela) ordered the celebration of Corpus Christi in the following manner: " The whole octave of Corpus Christi, The Most Blessed Sacrament must go to the Main Altar with four lighted candles and two torches, and after the vigil must go in procession inside the church with flowers and aromatic herbs"(14).

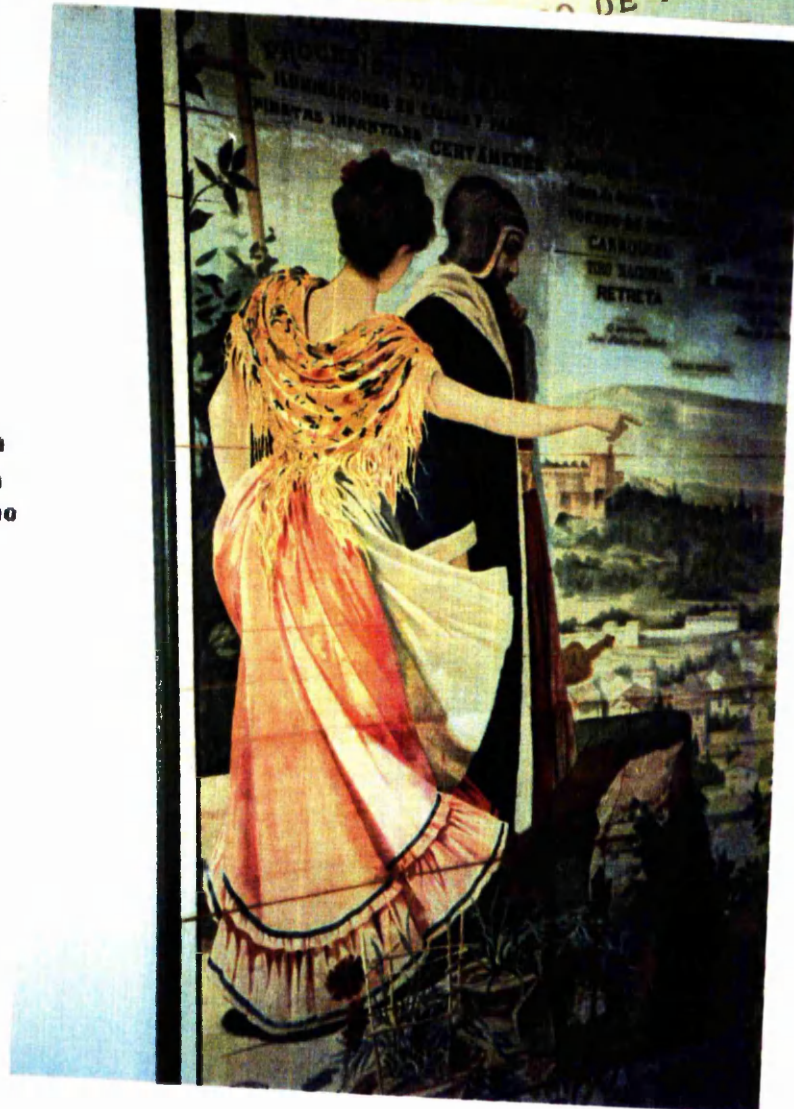
GRANADA

Fiestas del Corpus Christi

Del 28 de Mayo al 8 de Junio de 1902

DIANA	FUEGOS ARTIFICIALES	CARRERAS DE CABALLOS
VELADAS	EXPOSICIONES	Y TORNEO DE POLO
PROCESSION DEL SANTISIMO SACRAMENTO		
ILUMINACIONES EN CALLES Y PASEOS	TRES GRANDES CORRIDAS DE TOROS	Mazzantini,
JUEGOS INFANTILES	CERTÁMENES	Sagartijillo, Quinito, Sagartijo y Machaquito
		Reses de Saltillo, A. Martín y Villamarta
		TORNEO DE ESGRIMA
		DE PICHONES

Corpus Christi in Spain. The festival in Granada. Museo Taurino de Córdoba. 1989



In Caracas the first notice about the Corpus Christi celebration was in 1590. In the Act of the Cabildo of Caracas (municipal council) the neighbours demanded funds from the authorities to celebrate the festivity. Because of the poverty of the people, they could not afford the expenses of this important celebration. In 1594, with an improved economic situation the Cabildo ordered the use of the funds remaining from the Saint George festival to help the Corpus Christi celebration. Also it ordered the neighbours who lived in the streets in which the procession was held to clean them and to prepare the altars as usual. In 1595, the Cabildo reminded the Mayor of the city to prepare some joyful dances and comedy for the Corpus Christi festivity and gave his permission for the expenditure of as much money as was needed. Although the poverty of the city was an obstacle to maintaining the festivity, the civil authorities, from the very beginning of the XVII century wanted to celebrate the Corpus Christi festivity properly.

In 1619, as Corpus Christi day approached the civil authorities "had not time to prepare a comedy and other events, because of the absence of the Mayor".(They could not take any important decision without the approval of the principal authority).(15) To solve this problem they decided to charge some people to prepare a kind of representation with figures. They asked the Councillors to prepare a dance with mulatto girls and another with Indian girls of the repartimiento(8.73)Moreover they asked the established black and mulatto brotherhoods to prepare other dances, as they were established.

In 1620 the celebration of the festival went as well as possible given the moderate expense ordered. In 1621 the Cabildo asked the commissary to be in charge of the festivity and prepare a sacred drama but again it was recommended that the funds be used with moderation. This recommendation was made because the Mayors liked to spend a lot of money on the festivity. In 1624 the Cabildo obliged the guild of artisans and merchant to contribute a splendid dance while other dances were ordered to the Saint John and Altagracia brotherhoods plus a drama to be presented inside the Church.

The participation of black and mulatto women in the dances during the Corpus Christi procession was maintained until the arrival

of Bishop Diego de Baños y Soto Mayor. In 1687, he prohibited that participation and decreed it in **Constituciones Sinodales del Obispado de Venezuela y Santiago de León de Caracas**. To justify the prohibition he said: "In several cities of this Bishopric mulatto, black and Indian girls' dances have been introduced into the processions of not only Corpus Christi and its Octave but also in the festivities of the Patron Saints. This disturbs and troubles the devotion of the believers who must be present. The rehearsals of the dances and the competitions held for several days and nights produce severe offence to the Lord, Our God. Consequently, we prohibit these mulatto, black and Indian girls' dances. We order the major excommunication of every person who disobeys this mandate. We exhort the Civil Authorities of Our Majesty to comply and to execute this order"(16)

Also the celebration of *autos sacramentales* disappeared with the same disposition, although the Bishop did not prohibit them outside the church, as did Pope Innocent III, but ordered that all dramas had to be performed during the day time, and contributed to the strengthening of good behaviour and religious beliefs. They were required to be examined by a 'qualified' person, and never performed in the Indian towns.(17)

The elimination of the comedies and the female dances marked a new step in the celebration of the festivity. Paradoxically the spectacle of the *Tarasca* with its court of giants and devils acquired more strength. According to the Bishop's ideas these figures contributed to religious education but at the same time they gave entertainment and fun to the public. The Bishop Baños wanted to celebrate Corpus Christi with splendour and ordered the churches, to contribute to the celebration of the festivity. The streets had to be decorated, covered with flowers, and also, he said, "it is necessary to warn the neighbours to help in whatever way they could to render honour to the King of The Kings."(18)

From 1648 : for ninety seven years the Cabildo Acts did not mentioned the Corpus Christi festivities, perhaps because they were already settled and had entered into the routine of everyday life. The Cabildo, during this century, had faced many important problems, such as the division of land, the food supply, the export of cocoa, epidemics and foreign attacks. It would appear obvious that they would not mention between 1648-1745 a festivity

which had been established through the years as a popular manifestation and which had gradually deviated from the original religious significance.

However in the act of the Cabildo dated 14th of November 1746, it affirmed that "it was an ancient custom that the Mayors, who were elected every year, made at their own expense the dragon or *Tarasca* and prepared people to dress with costumes and masks, as devils." (19) But it also recorded that the celebration of the Corpus Christi festivity "had produced many disorders and immoral acts, performed by the masked persons, called "little devils". Those according to the document were " Blacks with very bad habits" and from experience "every year they destroyed things, and committed thefts".(20) The 1746 Act added that "these persons taking advantage of their masks went into the houses, without respect to anybody, and produced misfortune". So the members of the Cabildo decided not to permit any more of these excesses, "which offended God, Our Lord and the public cause." (21) The *Tarasca* was also forbidden; only the procession was permitted, as it always was with the giants, and a little dragon, similar to those used in cities of Europe. However, in practice, these promulgations seem not to have been fully applied.

In the 1758 Act the Mayors, Miguel Blanco Villegas and Francisco Javier Oviedo, made a donation to the city consisting of a new dragon, giants and devils. A guild of artisans composed of carpenters, painters and tailors made the figures. As Carlos Duarte said, "It was a pity that the Cabildo of Caracas did not preserve the drawing of the figures. The reconstruction of these could be done only through the bills of reparation delivered from the years 1764 to 1770. The dragon was painted with oil and put on a platform dressed with linen clothes. Under the platform twelve men were hidden in order to carry the *Tarasca*. In Caracas instead of the *Tarasca* woman they took out a child. He was seated on the *Tarasca* and took the sweets and coins that the public threw to his mother. He was called the *tarasquito* (little *Tarasca*), and his presence was recorded in the 1768 and 1779 Acts of the Cabildo. The giants were made of wood and carried by men who earned twenty *reales* plus food and drinks, during the three feast days. Receipts given to the painter Miguel Mogollón 1771-78 indicate that Nuns of the Immaculate Conception

Convent donated three altars, four giants and three little giants to the Corpus Christi festivity because they had a special relation to the Cabildo, which was the vice patron of the order".(22)

From 1770 onwards, The Corpus Christi procession was without a comedy performance or *autos sacramentales* following Bishop Mariano Martí's dispositions, who had the same policy as his predecessor the Bishop Baños. Mariano Martí condemned the dances and comedies, because they caused the ruination of spiritual life. In 1773 the procession could not be held because strong rains flooded the city of Caracas. Moreover towards the end of the 18th century in many European and Hispano- American cities, the *Tarasca*, giants and devils had been gradually disappearing, caused by the loss of their original significance and the dominance of a carnival spirit.

In Caracas the tradition was preserved, but public opinion about the festivity started to change, and some people thought that this type of celebration detracted from the dignity of The Corpus Christi festival. Although in 1780 the Corpus Christi celebration was very carefully made, the old figures which had served the Corpus Christi festivity since 1758 were replaced by new ones. These new figures were very expensive and after the festivity were stored in a house in San Mauricio street, belonging to the Cabildo of Caracas. During heavy rain in October 1781 the roof of the house collapsed, and all the figures were ruined. The Mayor of the City Unzaga y Amézaga ordered the rebuilding of the house, but he did not show any interest in making the Corpus Christi figures again.(23)

In July 1780 the members of the Cabildo in Caracas decided to replace the figures with a group of musicians who played drums, horns, clarinets, flutes, violins, bassviol and bass, and who were taught to be more appropriate to the devotion of the Blessed Sacrament. The musicians received the same fees as had been established for those who manipulated the figures. (24)

Enrique Bernardo Núñez, in the book **La Ciudad de los Techos Rojos** speaks of the composition of the musical group which played in Caracas on the day of Corpus Christi in 1781.

Before the 1780 decision, Corpus Christi had been celebrated in Caracas with a procession, as already mentioned. The little devils would come out in the afternoon, led by a devil whose mask was

larger than the ones worn by the others . The devils carried a rattle in the right hand and a madras kerchief in the left, and would dance grotesquely in front of the house windows, to the accompaniment of a drum. The ceremony of the dancing devils was assimilated by black slaves and free mulattoes. The church of Saint Mauritius in Caracas was the traditional stage for the little devils of Corpus Christi. (25) However as the Catholic Church began to realize that this religious ceremony had been popularised in the hands of the classes which had been kept on the fringes of their society, it decided to suspend the devil dancing as a ritual to the Most Blessed Sacrament.(26)

In the city of Caracas, the dance of the little devils of Corpus Christi is known to have been performed as late as the end of the XVIII Century. From there it spread to other cities and towns, while at one and the same time the manifestation was tending to disappear as a popular phenomenon in the place of origin.

As Carlos Duarte said: " The *Tarasca* and its court had lost their original meaning as a lesson in morality. Their presence had been transformed into incitement only for amusement and disorder. Thus the *Tarasca* and its courts disappeared after two hundred years of marching on Corpus Christi day through Caracas streets. With the passage of the years no one remembered the existence of the colourful procession." (27)

These celebrations were relegated to the more inaccessible regions of the country, particularly to the coffee, cocoa, and sugar cane plantations and where the population was predominantly black, of slave origin.(28)

It is curious however that the continuation of these celebrations remained undocumented until 1945, when Juan Liscano recorded the popular ritual manifestation of the Corpus Christi devil dancers of San Francisco de Yare in honour of the Most Blessed Sacrament. He promoted this group, and presented it in a public celebration to the newly elected president of Venezuela, the writer Romulo Gallegos, in 1948. Whether with the foundation of the Institute of Folklore, promoted by Liscano, the studies of popular manifestations have developed. The devil dancers thus began to be known to scholars, anthropologists and folklorists.

The Corpus Christi festivities including masked devils dancers are known to exist in Cata, Ocumare de la Costa, Cuyagua, Turiamo

and Chuao.(Aragua State); Patanemo (Carabobo State) Naiguatá (Departamento Vargas) and San Francisco de Yare (Miranda State). Recently, similar festivities have appeared in a modern revival of the ritual. In Tinaquillo, for example (Cojedes State) the tradition has been revived by the local people .

One can find different devil manifestations in other parts of Venezuela, such as in Guarico State or the city of Cumana, (29) but they have not been accepted by the Association of Devil Dancers, because these devils are not Corpus Christi devils, they do not practise that religion, and therefore cannot belong to the recently established society of the Corpus Christi devils (SOVEDAD) (30) which unites all the societies devoted to the Blessed Sacrament.

From a variety of sources (31) comparisons can be made of the Corpus Christi celebrations held in the different towns, and some common features emerge:

- The existence of Societies or Brotherhoods, which organized the festivity.

- The Societies have a hierarchic structure to maintain order and make decisions. The leaders are elected in a session in which all the members participate. The nominations are for life, but they can be removed depending upon their behaviour and the kind of leadership they assume.

- The members of the society have to pay an annual fee and also contribute with promises to pay alms.

- These brotherhoods are dedicated to the homage to the Most Blessed Sacrament. The manner in which they express their beliefs is through the performance of devil dancers. It is considered a very serious religious practice.

- The devils protect themselves (putting on crosses and praying secret prayers) before participation in the festivity. Only the Tinaquillo devils do not have such a ritual in preparation.

- The celebration of the Corpus Christi festivity starts on Wednesday, the Eve, continues on Thursday, the day of Corpus Christi, and in some places lasts until Friday. .

The Mass and the procession are common features. Altars are built along the route of the procession .

- Visits to the houses of important members of Corpus Christi, dead captains and others are part of the ritual . In Naiguatá, instead

of going to the houses of the dead captains they go to the cemetery and perform a ceremony there, praying and putting flowers on the graves.

- All of them have material artifacts, such as masks, cow bells, colourful dresses, icons, crosses, relics or amulets, and rattles.

The dances are all in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, but the way of performing the dances is different. However, all of them have to perform a cross with the feet. They are accompanied by the playing of drums and *cuatros* (small guitars). Each group has different kinds of drums but only one person, is in charge of playing the musical instruments. It is necessary to explain that the Turiamo, Cata, Tinaquillo, Ocumare de la Costa groups do not play drums, only *cuatros*. The others, Naiguatá, San Francisco de Yare and Chuao play both. Each devil of the different groups has its own rattle and plays it. (Plate, 18, 19, 20 and 21., p. (167-169)

-The celebration includes a meal after the ritual performance.

The Corpus Christi ritual in the places mentioned derives from the Spanish heritage and was preserved, probably, through the African slaves, which found in the mask performance and the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament a way to re-create some sense of common identity. The continuation of the Corpus Christi festival in these communities, would be the result of their relative isolation, for many years, from the rest of Venezuela. (Plate 22, p. 172)

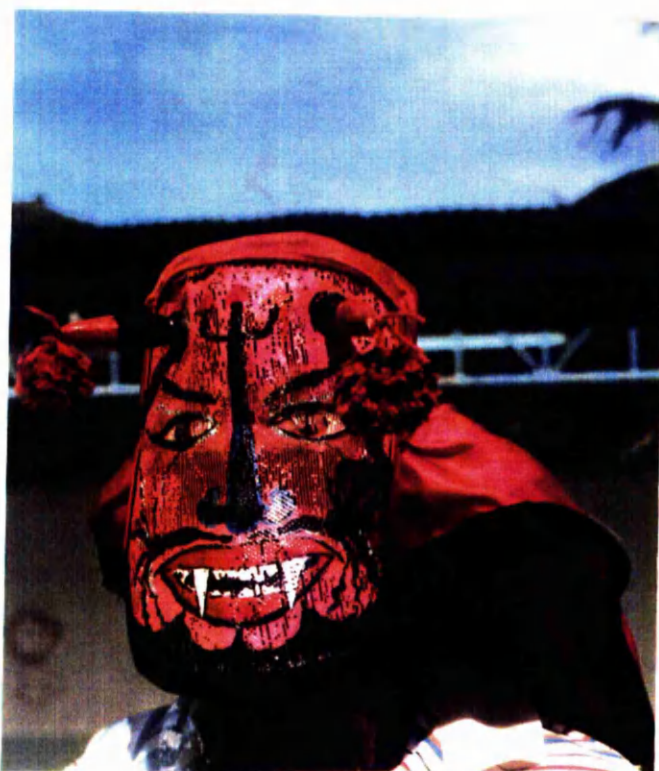
The Corpus Christi Society in Chuao.

Origin

The origin of the Corpus Christi Society of Chuao cannot be established with any certainty in La Obra Pia de Chuao. There is no documentation of the Corpus Christi Society or the celebration of the festivity until 1825, in which the Administrator of the plantation made an inventory (Nº 162) of goods and described some religious images, among them a small cross with a silver image of Christ. According to Maria Tecla and Jesus Franco the cross put on the altar in Corpus Christi is very ancient, from the era of slavery, and is probably one and the same.



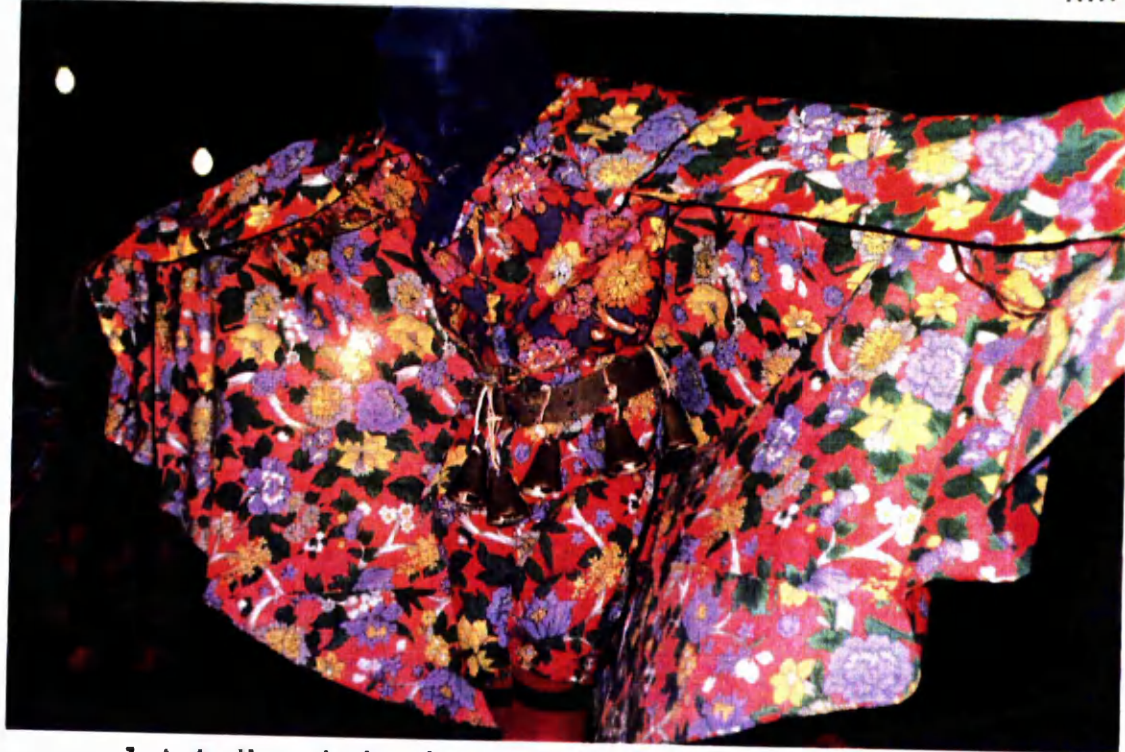
1. Tinaquillo Devils perform the ribbon dance in the meeting of the Venezuelan Devils in Chuao. 1989



2. Tinaquillo devil's mask. 1989



3. A devil dancing in the churchyard. 1989



1. A devil rendering homage to the Blessed Sacrament . Meeting of the Venezuelan devils . 1989



2 Turiamo devil's mask . 1989

3. The Turiamo Devils.





1. Naiguatá's Devils. Corpus Christi Eve. 1985



2. A devil doing penitence



3. A devil performing the dance of the egg. 1989



The Yare Devils
Meeting of the devils

According to oral tradition, María Tecla said that Juan Bautista Liendo, one of the last slaves she knew in Chuao, was in charge of teaching the doctrine. Moreover before the time of Corpus Christi, he used to gather the men of Chuao to give them the right preparation to celebrate the festivity. Francisca Planchez, a hundred year old woman, told her nephew Francisco Planchez that she remembered seeing devil dancers in Chuao when she was a little girl. However most of the persons directly involved in the present celebration remembered it from the time of the mandate of Martín Gutiérrez, First Captain of Corpus Christi. (More or less ninety years ago). Further back people have no exact memory. They always affirm that the Corpus Christi tradition is very ancient, and that probably it has been celebrated from the time of slavery.

Conditions of membership of the Corpus Christi society

It is likely that the Corpus Christi Society in Chuao was established early in the colonial period, given that the Corpus Christi festivity had become one of the most important celebrations of the Catholic Church at this time. In Chuao the Corpus Christi society is a male organization and women cannot be members.

At the present time, every male of the town can belong to the Society. A male resident of Chuao declares his wish to belong to the society and his desire to prepare himself for participation as a devil in the Corpus Christi festival. Then he has to comply with the following conditions: he has to be baptized, and he has to pay an annual fee of Bs 50 towards the maintenance of the Society. He is taught how to perform the different dances which make up the ritual, initially by observation and then by participation. Moreover, transference from fathers to sons is part of the learning process, since the elders serve as role models for the young. Aspirants are indoctrinated in the devotion to the body of Christ, and how crucial this attitude is for participation as a devil in Corpus Christi. Only by professing such faith can one belong to the Society and act as a devil. This initial preparation is usually carried out a year before the person participates in the festivity. María Tecla Herrera is in charge of explaining and teaching the doctrine, a process which also serves as a preparation for the first communion.(32)



1. The Chuao mask . 1989



2. The overseer leading the devil's dance. 1989



3. The *Sayona* dancing. 1989



The Chuao devils in the
Meeting of the devils.

1989

The knowledge of the new members is tested during the various rehearsals that take place. These usually begin on Easter Sunday and continue every Sunday until Ascension Thursday, when all the new Corpus Christi members participate. The community gathers in the street near the square in which the Cross of Forgiveness is placed (this name came from the times of slavery.) In those days when a slave had to be punished, if he (she) could run to the Cross reach it and kneel down, the overseer of the plantation could not punish him (her) He must forgive the slave. As a result this cross acquired a special meaning for the people of Chuao. They still believe in its "magic" power.

At this rehearsal the *cajero* (drummer) begins the devil sequence on the *caja* (a kind of drum) and the devils begin appearing one by one, not necessarily wearing the devil costume, but in every case sporting the mask. The devils dance, trying to comply with the basic requirements of the devil dance of Chuao, consisting of head movements, turning, playing the gourd, feet movements, leaning on the whip, all this carried out to the rhythm of the *caja* . Experienced devils participate in these rehearsals to stimulate the new ones and serve as a model for them. The participation of these experts is not obligatory, but is on a voluntary basis. The *cajero* plays the different rhythms and the aspiring devils must be able to recognise them and dance according to each variation.

The devils are organized in three legions, led by different captains. Each one decides which legion he wants to belong to. Generally the decision is based on the popularity or understanding with the captain of the legion. The devils who dance for the first time must start in the third legion .

The ruling group

The hierarchy within the Corpus Christi Society is made up of a first captain, a second captain, a third captain, an overseer and the Sayona, an alms captain, and a *cajero* (drummer) captain. (Plate 24, p182) The most important are the First Captain and the Overseer. The leaders are chosen by the majority vote of the members, who nominate the possible candidates. No one can propose himself.

Such was the case of Francisco Javier, known also as Chácara, the son of Manuel Ladera, an important member of the society who

had already died. Chácara informed me that, upon his father's death, they offered him the position that the older man had occupied, but the members did not base their offer on family ties, but rather on an analysis of Chácara's behaviour during twenty-three years of participating in the Corpus Christi ritual, and upon the positive majority vote awarded him by the brothers of the Society.

Another case was the election of Nestor Liendo as overseer, (Plate 23, p175) he told me that "in a meeting in which the members were looking for a candidate to replace Julián Castillo, one of the candidates Eustoquio Liendo did not want to accept it, because he had more fun dancing as devil than having the responsibility as overseer. Then other members of the Society proposed Néstor, because of the way he has behaved during seventeen years of participating as a devil in the Corpus Christi feast and based upon that he was elected with the consensus of all the members of the Society. For him, as he told me, it has been one of the most important events of his life. He gives three reasons: "one, the joy of having been proposed to occupy this position: two, because he could occupy the same senior position as his father Simon Ladera who was overseer, and a very good one: and three, because after all this year he had the honour to render homage to the Most Blessed Sacrament wearing the overseer's mask which was made specially for his father." (1989)

This status lasts for life, but they can be removed from their position if they do not fulfil the requirements of the Society. If that happens the members of the Society replace them at a special meeting. Sometimes, a leader decides to resign his senior position for reasons, such as sickness, age or a job which does not permit him to participate in the feast. In those cases the person who replaces him has to prove his ability and responsibility by filling the senior place for some years before the society actually gives him the title. This is the proving time, and allows the captain who has resigned to resume his senior position if he manages to resolve the problems which obliged him to leave his leadership post. The decision about the successor is taken by the ruling group in a special meeting.

The duty of the first captain, according to the tradition as stated by ~~the~~ present leader Jesus Franco, is to lead the Corpus Christi festivity. He has to take care of the initial preparation of the

Plate 23



. Néstor Liendo. The overseer of the Chuao devils. 1989

ritual, sharing the tasks with the rest of the leaders. During the performance he has to be the first to come out leading the first legion, although the devils themselves have to maintain a distance from him, in this first appearance. Afterwards he sits in front of the Church door, waiting for the devils and watching over them, observing their way of dancing. If they are not performing correctly he punishes them. For example, when the devils are dancing before the church, they must never turn their backs to it. If one of the devils does this Jesus Franco has the right to whip him. He also has to control the number of the devils, counting them and sharing this task with the other captains. The final check on the number of devils is his responsibility, together with the overseer, Nestor Liendo.

If the first captain cannot participate in the festival for some reason, he will be replaced by the second captain or the third one.

The second captain Javier Ladera 'Chácara' is in charge of the second legion of devils, leading the second group of devil dancers, and has to take care of them, observing and counting them.

The third captain José Antonio Montiel 'Pito' (Jesus Franco's son) comes out with the first legion as assistant of the first captain.

The overseer Nestor Liendo is very powerful within the Society, as the "father " of the Corpus Christi devils. He exerts therefore his authority at the same level as the first Captain, and sometimes could be more powerful in his position as "father". He comes out leading the third legion accompanied by the Sayona, the mother of the devils, a female role played by a man, Fortunato González *Liberato*. The Sayona is expected to take special care of the little devils, who participate for the first time in the Corpus Christi festivity.

The Captain of Alms Pablo Borges is the person in charge of collecting the members' annual fees, the money given to the Most Blessed Sacrament and the payment of the *cajero* .

The obligations of the ruling group of the Society may be summarized as follows: The preparation of the festival, the administration of the income, the decisions about those who may participate as devils, giving authority to older devils for the training of the young, and the preparation of the rehearsals prior to Corpus Christi.

In addition, the directors take decisions regarding external affairs. For example, they decide about proposals to participate in different events; they grant permission for any recording or filming of the festivity, and they met out punishment to those who transgress the established norms. In those cases the final decision is with Néstor Liendo the overseer. For example, last year, 1989, one of the researchers of the Centre of Studies of Folklore of Venezuela tried to take a film without asking for the permission of the Society leadership. As a result Néstor, took the decision to order his arrest and destroy the film.

The participation of the Devils of Chuao in the Venezuelan Devils Society is not welcomed by the second captain Chácara outside the time of Corpus Christi. However, in the discussion between the leaders the opinion and final decision of the overseer Nestor Liendo prevails. Thus Chácara has not participated in any of these meetings, but he continues to exert his leadership in the Corpus Christi festivity.

In addition, those who are given responsibility each year must demonstrate by their actions that they deserve to be the devils in the Corpus Christi festivity, and to be granted the attributions outlined. This represents a challenge for the leaders, who every year take great care in the preparation and realization of the festival.

While the leaders have certain powers, the organization has established that any brother of the Society of Corpus Christi who realises that one of the directors has failed in his duties has the right to complain, and even to punish that captain. Thus, the exercise of power within the Society is controlled democratically by the group. Augusta Chavez relates how José Rivas (Ladera) was replaced by Jesus Franco, due to the wrong leadership exerted by the former when he took a decision which involved a change of hierarchy of one of the devils, without consulting with the rest of the captains.(33)

Finally, Chácara told me, any of the devils can be promoted from low-ranking devil to captain of any legion. This depends on his behaviour and abilities, and is not necessarily dependent on being the son of someone important within the festivity. However those with the greatest potential are often those whose parents were devout and active participants in the Corpus Christi Society. It is the parents

who transmit their devotion and motivate their children to emulate their behaviour and beliefs. In this way, the devotion is transmitted from parents to children, which is of itself, a sign of the strength of belief and a way of guaranteeing its preservation. (34)

The Corpus Christi Festival

The account of the Corpus Christi festival is based upon the 1984 celebration in Chuao, supplemented by the performers own account of their roles. Although experience has been gained in the festivals of 80,81 and 85. This was of particular interest for the following reasons.

First, there was no Catholic priest present in 1984. Boatmen had apparently gone to collect him in their motor -launches, only to find that he could not attend . His role was therefore played by one of the Chuao townsmen, who dressed himself as a priest. The ritual was unchanged, other than excluding the Mass and communion; and the procession took place without the monstrance and obviously the Sacrament. No one seemed concerned about the priest's absence, as it was often celebrated without support from official Catholic clergy.

1984 was also significant in that the Holy House had been rebuilt, in cement blocks; a new roof was also being added. All the members of the Corpus Christi Society (the devil's dancers) felt rather proud of these improvements, especially Néstor Liendo as it was on his initiative that the cane and mud house was replaced.

Thirdly, José Rivas(Ladera) had died during the year preceding the 1984 Corpus Christi festival. For more than forty years, he had been a devil dancer and for many years, first captain, and even though when he died he had already retired and no longer danced, he continued to pay his dues and give alms.

As he himself had told me before his death "but, we are going to raise alms for the holy Sacrament, who gives us back more, for our soul. If you can't dance, don't dance, but you must pay your alms every year... Then I kept on paying three bolívares every year, whether I danced or not, beside the alms to the Saint, which are fifty bolívares " (José Rivas, 1979).

Synopsis of the Corpus Christi festival at Chuao.

The timetable

On Tuesday evening: Two days before the festival begins all the Brothers of the Society meet in the Holy House, i.e. the shrine of the

Most Blessed Sacrament. Each captain of the three legions reports how many devils will participate under his command next day.(35)

Wednesday. On Corpus Christi Eve the rituals begin at 5 a.m. followed by the devils dance, from 11 am to 12 midday, with the appearance and fall of the three legions of devils; after midday there is the ceremony in the Holy House; and in the early afternoon there are the visits to the houses of the Captains of Corpus Christi, starting with the more important dead Captains and continuing with the living Captains according to their hierarchy. During or after the visits, the devils rest at the *caimito* tree. These visits are followed by reading of the edicts (36) and finally, after nightfall, the *Velorio* (vigil) of the devils is held until the next morning.

Thursday, the day of Corpus Christi: Prayers start off the day and in mid to late morning further visits are made to the brothers of the society. At twelve noon, Mass is held, or in the absence of a priest, prayers are said in church. During the Mass or prayers, the devils prostrate in penitence inside the church(37); early afternoon visits to the Captains commencing with the dead following the same order as the day before, with the devils resting at the *caimito* tree as needed, and the edicts are read, if necessary. At 5 pm the benediction of the Sacrament is said, with a procession, or in the absence of a priest, praying in front of the altars. In the late afternoon the final dance in the churchyard takes place and visits to other members of the Corpus Christi Society; after nightfall the close of the day's festivity with the farewell of Corpus Christi.

The day after, Friday: Those so inclined, will dance in unorganised groups throughout the morning. Afterwards all the devils meet at the *caimito* tree to feast a *sancocho*, a kind of stew, with fish or pork, and a variety of vegetables.

The following Thursday, the Octave. The devils dance and performed again in the late afternoon, followed, perhaps by reading of the edicts. (That happened in the 85 celebration but in other years they may or may not do it at this point).

The Eve of Corpus Christi.

Wednesday Eve

Protective rituals of the Corpus Christi

On Wednesday, the eve of Corpus Christi, each of the dancers individually takes a ritual bath in the river and rubs himself in a potent balm to give extra strength for the repentance in the churchyard.

This is an indispensable precursor to the Crossing of the Relics to protect them against Satan. Plate 24, 2, p. 182 The balm is a cooked mixture of rum, wine and herb infusion made of the leaves and flowers of *Bretonica morada*, brown sugar and beaten eggs. Afterwards the more experienced devils perform their "crossing". This consists of prayers that are said while the relics are being placed across the chest and the back, passing below the arms, so that the performers are crossed front and back. The prayers said include the Apostles Creed and the Our Father. Those who perform the "crossing" include María Tecla, Modesta Planchez, Augusta Chávez, Gabriel Ladera 'Chácara' and Jesús Franco. It is evident that knowledge of the necessary ritual procedures is not limited to member of the Corpus Christi Society

Each devil has four or five relics used for protection. The relics are cloth packages, each containing a palm leaf cross from Palm Sunday (Augusta every year keeps the blessed palm she brings from Palm Sunday from Choróni) among other things. (plate 24, p. 182) María Tecla Herrera described how they are prepared with the following ingredients: "Blessed palm, rose petals, and some special herbs, such as *bretonica morada*". (1989) But Chácara indicates how his father Manuel Ladera put together the relics: "Blessed palm frond, a magnet, and a little cup of nails, so that the magnet could eat, and *apoco* (the colloquial name for a local herb) But I don't know how they prepare relics today. My relics are the ones my father made". (1989)

In the past Manuel Ladera was the one in charge of making relics. He was an authority on the traditional ritual and he also taught 'the devils' the sacred prayers. Nowadays relics are prepared by María Tecla or Jesús Franco.



1. The *cajero* Julio Bacalao in the churchyard. 1989



2. The relics of the devils. 1989



3. The woollen ball which adorns the socks of the devils. 1989

"The relic is sacred because it is baptized and what it contains is sacred" (Augusta, 1985). The baptism of the relics consists of sprinkling holy water, on the Eve of the secret ceremony of protection, they are then blessed. The Jesuit priest Ignacio Castillo, if he is in Chuao at that time blesses the relics and masks. In his absence Augusta takes this role.

The relics protect the devils during the Corpus Christi time, and they have in theory, to be worn from the Eve of Corpus Christi for 40 days. The relics play a double role, because, whilst they protect the devils, they can also endanger the 'devils' if certain rules are not obeyed. It is not allowed to 'cross' the relics before the ritual bath in the river, have sex or drink alcohol while wearing the relics or reveal them to anyone.

After the crossing of the relics, the devils, according to the legion they belong, gather in the homes of Augusta, María Tecla and Camilo Borges. They recite Our Father as they put on each piece of their costumes. They wear colourful trousers or breeches according to status and a separate shirt. In the past white cloth was individually hand painted, but nowadays printed fabrics are worn. Tails, which are made from the same fabric as the costume are sewn on to the seat of the trousers; and dangling from the ends of the tails are, either cow bells or improvised bells made from coke cans. "They are another form of protection because their sound drives away the evil spirits." (Augusta, 1989) The low ranking devils have the tails tied on Wednesday and untied on Thursday. The captains tails are untied on Wednesday and tied on Thursday. (see page 224)

A black cross is applied on the back of the shirt, and another made of the blessed palm frond is placed on both front and back. The devil's costumes differentiate the wearer's place in the hierarchy of the Corpus Christi Society. Low-ranking devils wear knee-length breeches, adorned with coloured woollen balls. The captains must wear long trousers without these balls.

On their feet, the devils wear decorated *alpargatas* (a typical Venezuelan leather-soled sandal) that have soft uppers made of woven black cotton). On the front and centre portion, the sandals can be embroidered and bear a cross made of blessed palm frond. Low-ranking devils wear stockings, of any colour, and the captains, any kind of socks.

The devils carry a maraca (rattle) in the right hand. The *maracas* are made by the performers themselves, from gourds, with seeds of the *capacho* tree placed inside. The origin of the use of the rattles is in the doctrine, for when the devils were looking for Jesus Christ and could not find him, "They carried instruments in one hand (the rattle) and a whip in the other." (The Doctrine of María Tecla. See page 139,142).

With the rattle they attach two or three scarves in their right hand. One of them must be white, the others can be of any colour, but never red. (The devils can use red colours in the rest of the costume). White is the colour chosen as it is associated with the purity of Mary, who -according to the doctrine- "was the first who defeated the devil by making the sign of the cross. For this reason, white is a colour that affords protection." (see the Doctrine.,p.145)

As is the case with the rattle, the whip has a mythical origin. According to the Doctrine, the real devils who searched for Jesus Christ also carried a whip in their left hand, with these same characteristics and thus, an important element of the ritual. (See the Doctrine, p.145)

After the devils have dressed further protection is provided. In the absence of the priest, Augusta blesses the relics and the masks.(38)

The masks are oval in shape and painted in white, red and black. The eyes are protruding, rather like small pingpong balls. The nose and mouth are painted in an exaggerated fashion, and great care is taken to copy the design exactly on each occasion. The head of the mask is adorned with two horns tied together with a ribbon. The distinction between the captain's masks and the low ranking devils is that the former mask has a beard made from *cocuiza*.. This establishes the hierarchy (Plate 43,p.237 Then, Augusta accompanied by María Tecla sprinkle holy water on each of the devils. (The priest comes to Chuao at least, once a year, and he blesses the water, which Augusta keeps for the Corpus Christi festivity). During the blessing Augusta and María Tecla whisper "male" prayers, (39) including La Magnífica, which is the most sacred prayer, known only by the captains and those who perform the crossing. This prayer, which protects the devils, is said almost silently (such that we cannot determine whether this is the song of Mary as recorded by St. Luke,

or some other prayer.) The protective power of this prayer is such that it has to be kept secret by those who have been taught it.

Each devil is touched with palm leaves, that Augusta obtained from the church of Choroní after the blessing of palms on Palm Sunday. All this protection is needed in order to guard the devil performers from subversion by the real devil, i.e. Satan himself whose fall down they are imitating. "Moreover I give them drinks of holy water and, I prepare a *sahumerio* (smoke) by mixing incense, myrrh, and gum of the storax tree to protect them, because these are the most triumphant fragrances of Jesus, given to him from The King, God, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem." (Augusta 1989) When asked to explain La Magnífica Augusta was more evasive, but with good reason : "The *Magnificat* is a secret prayer, known only to the captains, Maria Tecla, me and some of the older devils. These secret prayers cannot be told because they can lose their power and fail to protect the devils. The group leaders, such as Chacara, Néstor, Jesús Franco and the others have to know these prayers because they need extra protection. When Pelón my son, was told that he would probably replace the *Sayona*, I said to him 'Son do not forget to tell me because if you have to dance as the *Sayona* I have to teach you and protect you against the devil. You know, Carmen Elena, the devil can come and call them and if they are not protected they follow him and disappear, nobody knows where they go. "(Augusta,1989)

Protection from the real devil is of utmost importance. "I try to give the devils a good protection, and sprinkle holy water on the street on the way to the Cross of Forgiveness. If I see that a "devil" is very heavy and cannot reach the Cross of Forgiveness I help him by saying special prayers. Last year I was at the Cross of Forgiveness and one of the devils could not advance, he was very, very heavy, I went up to him and put a cross (I always have with me) on his shirt, and protected him. He could not advance because he had forgotten the relics. People may think it is a lie, but it's not, you either believe me or you don't, the religion of Corpus Christi is a very strong one. The *cajero* also has to be very well protected, but he knows how to protect himself. He is a captain. Sometimes I also say some prayers for him, I protect the *caja* and sprinkle holy water on it. " (Augusta,1989).

Now that the performers are dressed they each take their contribution towards the payment of the *cajero* to the house of Camilo Borges.

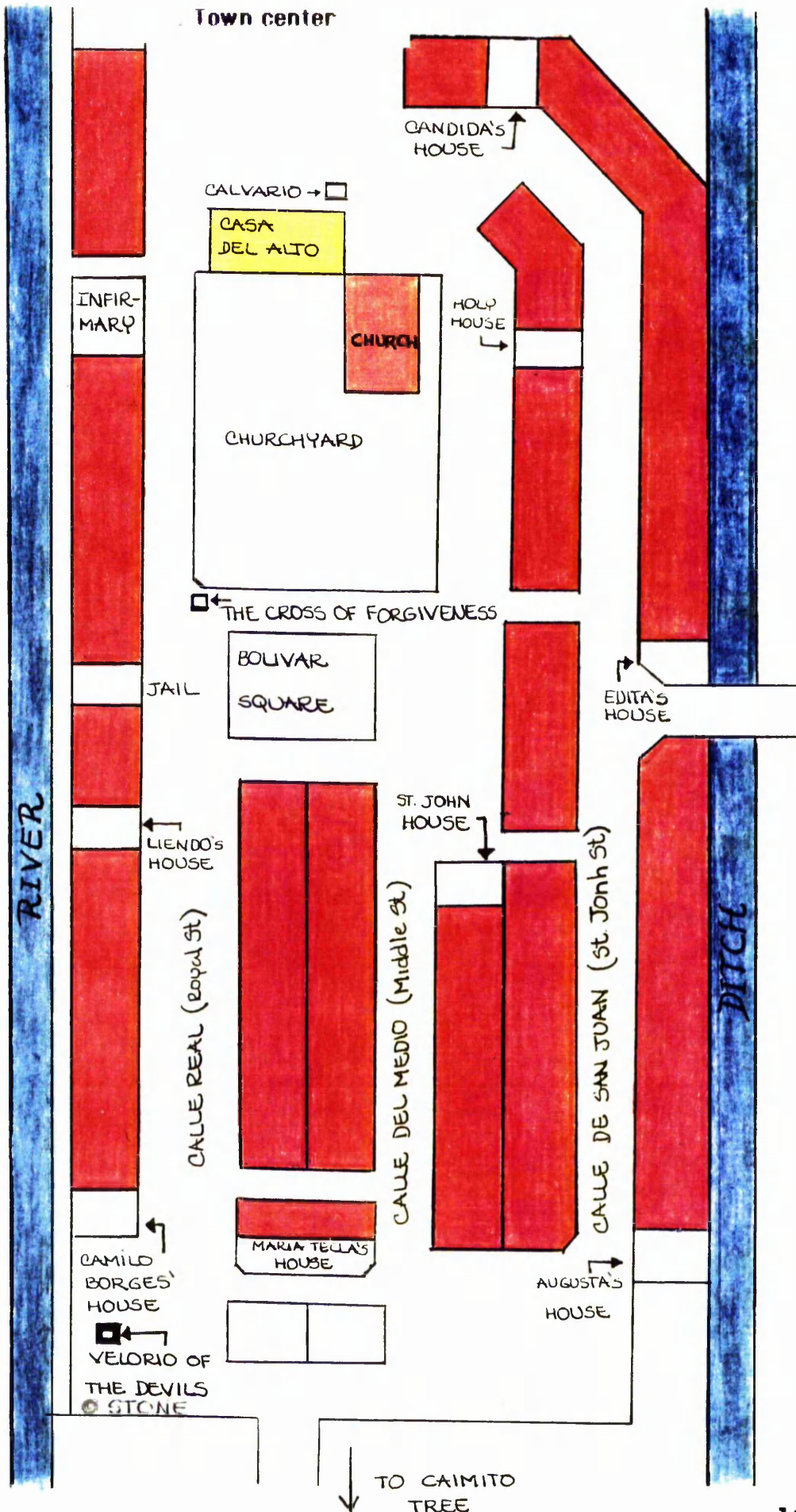
They wait for the church bell, and the drum to signal the next phase of the performance. This bell is made of cast bronze, and dates from colonial times. The significance of the bell in the festivity is also related in the Doctrine of María Tecla "the sound of the bell is likened to the voices of angels, archangels, cherubin and seraphim, which sing Glory and praise to our Lord, God. When the bell sings all evil spirits disappear" (1989). Nowadays a woman, Eufemia is the *campanera* (the person in charge of ringing the church bell). Tamakún, one of the oldest low-ranking devil, who has been dancing devils for thirty three years, remembered that his father was *campanero* at the time of Martín Gutiérrez, his uncle. (1989)

The public appearance and fall of the devils

There are three Legions, by Christ's mandate, representing the three persons of the Trinity. The fall of the devils recalls that Satan failed in his quest to search for Christ. As Maria Tecla said in the Doctrine, (see p.142) one particular feature distinguishes them from the real devil. The legions turn their faces upward, not downward, each time they fall. Looking downwards relates to darkness and since Satan reigns in darkness and Christ in heaven; thus they must turn upward, turning towards the light. Whoever looks down is the real devil.

At eleven on the Wednesday morning when the first peal of the bells is heard the first legion of devils is prepared to start the festivity. (All the devils fall three times in the *Calle del Medio* (Middle Street) but Néstor, the Overseer, is the only one who does in the *Calle Real* (Royal Street). (40)(Map 8,p.187)

As the *cajero* (41) beats the rhythm interplaying with the bell, the first Captain Jesús Franco (42) comes out alone, through the *Calle del Medio*, kneeling down on the ground, greeting the *cajero* and the public, and tracing sign of the cross while holding his maraca (rattle) in the right hand. Then he rises, dancing forward, "in a decent manner "as he said. This means he cannot jump as the other devils do, as it wouldn't be befitting his senior position and in order to maintain discipline. Then he falls down again kneeling on



the ground three times (Plate 25,3,p.189) until he reaches the Cross of Forgiveness. (Map 8,p.187) When in front of it he dances in the same form as above, tracing the cross, and rendering honour to this sign of Christ. As he continues to dance he moves backward from the Cross, but never turns his back to it. He goes into the churchyard, doing his dance and afterwards he sits down in front of the Church door waiting for the devils. When the first captain is going to the Churchyard the first legion of devils, led by the third captain Pito Montiel enters the town by the Middle Street, jumping and falling to the ground face up. Augusta, María Tecla and some other women pray over them and sprinkle holy water on them each time they fall to the ground.(Plate 25,5,p.189)

The Chuao dance has certain basic elements: jumping, moving the head, turning, playing the rattle and moving the feet while supported by the *mandador* -a whip -, with which one follows the rhythm. The feet move forward, sideways and crossways. Sometimes as a shuffle and other times as a jump. Within the limit of these basic steps there is considerable freedom for individual performers to develop personal dancing style. (Plate 26,p.190) This allows recognition of the passing of the tradition from fathers to sons, e.g. people of Chuao said that Néstor and Chácara dance as their fathers. As the devils reach the Cross of Forgiveness they kneel in front of the Cross, and afterwards, also never turning their back to the cross, they head for the churchyard. There they lie face down prostrate on the ground but with the mask pushed back over the head. In this position the devils lie penitent for half an hour. (Plate 29,1,2,p.194)

When the second peal sounds, at eleven thirty, the second legion, the largest of the three, makes its appearance. It is commanded by the second captain, Chácara, and proceeds on the same route as the first legion. Meanwhile, the first legion has gone to the Holy House to rest as they wait for the other groups to carry out their part of the ritual. (Plate 32,1,p.201)

When the third peal sounds, both the first and second legions are at the Holy House, located level with the Church, on a side street to the right of it. (Map 8) The sound of the third peal at twelve noon signals the appearance of the third legion, composed by the little devils and others. They have to wait until the overseer Néstor

Plate 25



1. Corpus Christi Eve, 1984



2. The fall of the devils, 1984



3. The fall of the first Captain, Jesús Franco, 1984



4. The third Captain and the first legion, 1984

5. Augusta Chávez blessing the devils, 1984



1. The fall of the devils .1984



2. The Overseer watching the devils. 1984



Liendo, who, as the "father" of the devil, first performs his own dance. The overseer's dance follows the basic steps, and the general pattern of the captain's dance. However, when he falls down he lies on the right side of his body. Moreover his dance is different from the others because of its lightness and delicacy, and the way he moves his feet. The rest of the devils dance on tiptoe in the alpargata. However, the overseer and the first captain place their feet firmly on the ground. (Plate 28,1,p.193)

Néstor explained: "I flap a handkerchief in the air with elegance and after a while do the same again. (Plate 30,p.195) Don't you see that he is an old man, he is old, he is the father of all devils. The *caja* beats the same rhythm as the others, and I follow it with the movement of my legs and the sound of my maraca . When I reach the Cross of Forgiveness, I kneel down in front of it, and then without turning back I go to the Church yard and afterward to the Holy House." (1989).

When the overseer has finished his dance and left for the Churchyard, the third legion starts to fall down. The *Sayona*, the mother of the devils, appears with them, accompanied by all the little devils, through the *Calle del Medio* . (Plate 27,1,p.192) The *Sayona* falls down sitting on the ground with the little devils tied to 'her'. She only lets them go on alone, when they are a few metres from the Cross of Forgiveness. From this moment the youngsters are free to dance individually. As the *Sayona* and the little devils dance in front of the Cross, the devils of the first two legions come out of the Holy House to receive the mother, the *Sayona* .(43) 'She' scarcely dances, they take it in turns to raise her up, and carry her to the door of the Church. In front of the church the third legion acts as the other two did and wear the mask horizontally, so the face is not covered.

Augusta explains : "They are already repentant devils, who have repented from evil and they are looking for Christ so that Christ will forgive them, that is why they lie down like that, there, that is where repentance is, and they are asking for forgiveness, they lie down in the yard, that is what is happening." (1985).(Plate 29,1,2,p.194) When the bell begins ringing in the churchyard it means the devils are asking for God's mercy. On the Eve of Corpus Christi they indicate, that Jesus Christ has forgiven them. At this stage, they can stand up



1. The third legion: The *Sayona* with the little devils, 1984

2. The *Sayona*, 1984



3. Mothers greeting their sons after the fall of the third legion, 1984



1. A low-ranking devil
dancing the *mojiganga*.

1984



2. A devil entering
the Holy House. 1984

Plate 29



1. The devils doing penitence in the churchyard, after their fall . 1984



2. The devils doing repentance. 1989



The Overseer
dancing the *mojiganga*
on Corpus Christi Eve.

1984



with the masks still balanced on the top of their heads. The dance that follows shows their joy, means they have been forgiven and they are now Christians, who start a new life, the spiritual life." (1989)

The House of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Holy House (Map 8)

This house belongs to the Corpus Christi Society and is their meeting place. They call it the 'Holy' House, because it exists to give honour to the Blessed Sacrament in the Corpus Christi festivity, and also serves as a rest house for the devils during festival time, as was expressed in the Doctrine of María Tecla (p.144)

"The House which now belongs to the Society used to belong to Hilario López and Angel Pía. Angela was the daughter of the slave Antonia Pía, and inherited the house from her. Antonia Pía also had two sons Juan Liendo and Dionisio Pía. The promises of the devils and the *novena* from Corpus Christi used to be held there." (María Tecla, 1989). (According to this information it is possible to calculate that this house has been used to render honour to the Sacrament for at least ninety years.)

Entering the house, there is a main room flanked by two smaller rooms on each side. Curtains cover the entrances to these side rooms. In the main room there are benches where the brothers of the Corpus Christi Society may sit. (Members of the society, brothers and devils means the same in the context of Chuao Corpus Christi festival).

Near the back wall, is an altar dedicated to the Sacrament, (Plate 31,1,p.197) consisting of a table covered by a white table cloth, that bears an inscription: Most blessed Sacrament R.D.V.V 1961, (It was given by one of the believers for a favour granted). Over the table cloth is a knitted white mat. A picture on the wall behind the Altar wears the same inscription: "Most blessed Sacrament of the "Altal" (wrong spelling of the Spanish word: Altar) R.D.V.V. 1961. There are also five pictures: the Virgin of Coromoto, who is the Patron Virgin of Venezuela; Jesus Christ with a lamb; the Holy Trinity; the Holy Spirit; and finally José Gregorio Hernández (a Venezuelan doctor, who is not yet canonized but beloved by his followers). On the table there is prayer for the Most Blessed Sacrament which has been framed. In the centre of the table there are two crucifixes, one made of wood, the other, smaller, of natural white flowers. On each



1. The altar in the Holy House. 1984



2. María Tecla and Augusta leading the ceremony in the Holy House. 1984

side of them are two vases containing natural pink bougainvilleas and pink cayenas, while on both edges of the table, next to the vases of flowers, two candlesticks, with white lighted candles and artificial flowers around them. White natural flowers are scattered along the table. This altar is arranged every year in the same way.

As described above, after 'the fall of the three legions', the devils meet at the Holy House, where some of the townsfolk were waiting already. As the devils enter it, Jesús Franco and Néstor Liendo count them, to ensure that all are there. (Those Captains protect them from the real devil, who tries to disturb the celebration by tempting and deceiving the devils). Then, Néstor goes inside the house followed by Jesús Franco, who is always the last one to go in. The masks are not worn inside the Holy House, but are left leaning against the walls; and neither is the whip used. Inside, a ceremony of reaffirmation of the devotion to the Corpus Christi is held, through prayers, songs and dances, which last an hour or so. Augusta Chávez leads the prayers as follows: (Plate 31,2,p197)

"Let us welcome our brother dancers who have not danced for years and who today the Blessed Sacrament has called to be present here with their ornaments, in the same way that you know that this religion is such a great religion, that even though you sometimes forget it, perhaps you cannot, but in your body you always feel when the moment has come to render homage to the most Blessed Sacrament. The most Blessed Sacrament is power, it is light, it is glory, it is victory for Christians of the faith, thus you all know that the prayer says it very well, woe to the one who prides himself on possessing a virtue, who does not feel, and he who does not feel, who puts on the costume just for the sake of dancing, that one is not welcome. You are all here adoring the Most Blessed Sacrament because you have love, peace and religion. This is a religion. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." (All make the sign of the cross)

"All of us faithful Christians must have full-hearted devotion, and to the Holy cross of Jesus Christ our light, because on it he chose to die, to free us and redeem us from the evil enemy, thus [the faithful Christian] shall become accustomed to making the sign of the cross and to cross himself, all making on themselves three crosses, the first one on the forehead, so that He may keep us from bad

thoughts, the second one on the mouth, so that He may keep us from bad words, the third one on the breast so that He may keep us from all evil thoughts and desires, saying this way: By the sign of the holy cross, from our enemies keep us, o lord, in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. (All of them make the sign of the cross, as before reading the Gospel).

She continues: "Open, lord, my lips to praise and bless thy holy name, and that of the purest [Virgin Mary], illuminate our hearts inflamed with goodness, so that with dignity and devotion we will pray this most blessed rosary, which we offer to the Most Blessed Sacrament and that we may merit the esteem of divine God. This divine rosary must be prayed, with special devotion, because all who pray it will surely be saved, he will be saved without remedy, praying with devotion in five houses, to the Virgin, with all his heart." Then she leads them in praying the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the glory be to the Father, to remember the day the Messiah was born in Bethlehem. Before commencing the rosary she recites some verses, which are the same every year:

The devil has gone away
and suffers a great sadness
because the Christian pray
to the sovereign princess.

The devil has become angry
he feels a great melancholy
because the Christians pray
the rosary of Mary.

She announces: the first glorious mystery of the triumphant resurrection of the Son of God. Every one recites the Our Father and ten Hail Mary's and afterwards sings these rhymed verses, which are repeated eight times.

Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar
and Mary conceived without original sin
Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar
And Mary conceived without original sin.

Then follows the Glory be to the father. This sequence of prayer is repeated for each of the five glorious mysteries, the others are the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, The Assumption at

the coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven. Subsequent she prays Hail Holy Queen: "Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee we turn up our eyes, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Oh merciful, oh loving, o sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, oh holy mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promise of Christ" (Corpus Christi 1985)

Afterwards Augusta continues saying : " So that each petition that we are going to make here be for your benefit and the formation of your spirit and your soul." Then she directs the litanies of the Saints, and the chorus responds with the usual "Pray for us". Then she says the prayer: Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us...etc. (Corpus Christi 1985). These prayers are (except for the verses invented by Augusta*) a universal and standard part of Catholic devotion.

Then, Augusta prays for the dead: "Let us offer this Creed to the Most Blessed Sacrament, for all the brothers who today sleep, the sleep of peace, they are not present corporeally, but spiritually they are, so that he may pardon their guilt and sins. After the Apostolic Creed, she prays: "Oh, my most loving Jesus, see me here prostrated before thy divine presence, I adore thee with all my poor spirit and I unite my adoration with all those of whom thou has dwelt, thou shall be adored for all eternity, I adore thee and revere thee in this august and divine sacrament and with our presence and the vestments of the Holy Spirit. Strengthen thou our holy faith and love with this visit, so that we may respond all being. To Jesus thy most loving worthy victim of the eternal Father, origin of all that is good, I adore thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament desiring to make amends for all profane 'references' to him. I desire, oh God, to earn thy respect, I also ask that thou wish, you give us many blessings." And after this prayer, she again leads the group in the our Father.

These prayers in honour of the Sacrament always take place in the absence of the Sacrament. At no point in the Corpus Christi festival is the Sacrament taken to the Holy House even if a priest is present. Then follows the oath of the brothers of the Society to the Most Blessed Sacrament.



1. Devils resting in the Holy House.1984



2. A devil asking for alms



3. Ramón Hernández waiting for the devils in the Holy House.1984

She tells them:

"Do you swear that you will hear the prayer of the
Most Blessed Sacrament with pity and mercy.

The devils answer:

"Today, the eve of Corpus Christi, I present myself before you, with a humble heart, to prostrate myself at your feet, my lord Jesus Christ. I Know that you have helped everyone who has approached you, you have helped him, Lord. I want to know how to approach you without feeling fear."

The most Blessed Sacrament speaks to them through Augusta's voice, answering:

"My children, I am the father, the most faithful brother, do not fear me, look for me and you will find me, call me and I will answer you, tell me your problems, tell me what sin you have committed and I will forgive, tell me what illness burdens you and I will cure it, I am your father, I am your friend, I am your brother, I am your judge, I am your physician, I am the one who directs your problems, your steps, I am your lord and defender. I am the son, the Most Blessed Sacrament and I have in my sacred sanctuary to hide the good ones from the wrath of the evil ones, I have given them my most holy mother as an adopted mother. My children, I cannot tolerate blasphemy, nor any mockery that is made of me because you are condemning yourselves, you are my sheep and I am your shepherd. Woe unto him who strays from my flock, he will remain wandering without finding his destiny. Do not take my name in vain, because to do this is to damn oneself, do not believe in me, if in your heart you do not really feel this belief, you must not take the ornament only to have fun with my name because you do not know the harm you do yourself. Truly I tell you, that he who takes my name as a diversion, sins ignorantly, and ignorantly condemns himself. Ignorance is the greatest sin, my children, I remind you of the joy and fervour you have at my side, my children. Live the unity in the love, as is ordained by your Eternal Father. Well, my children, He takes his leave of you, He who has had this time for conversation with you. I am love, I am peace, I am the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar."

Then they all pray the Our Father and the Hail Mary again.

This is followed by the response of the devils, their prayer, their supplication:

"Good morning, my father, Good morning Redeemer, Humbled. I beg you, Mercy sir. Blessed be this day, blessed be the moment that I meet with you, Most Blessed Sacrament.'

From hidden enemies and from bad thoughts, deliver us every hour."

Most Blessed Sacrament.

From evil desires and bad misunderstandings, defend me, my Father

Most Blessed Sacrament

If on distant ways I meet with my enemies, remove them from my presence

Most Blessed Sacrament

From painful illness and long suffering, keep me, my Redeemer.

Most Blessed Sacrament

For my sick brothers in their beds of suffering, take care of me my Redeemer

Most Blessed Sacrament

From prisons and intrigues and bad amusements, defend me, my Father

Most Blessed Sacrament

For absent brothers who are not here at this moment, take care of them wherever they are

Most Blessed Sacrament

In games and diversions, in all my pastimes, stay close to me

Most Blessed Sacrament

Today I am before you, with all my ornaments in order to receive your approval

Most Blessed Sacrament.

I am leaving now, now I am saying good-bye very joyfully, and very happily give me your blessing.

Most Blessed Sacrament. Good-bye, my dear Father, master of my heart, but I take you with me, I am very joyful and very happy because I am before you

Most Blessed Sacrament."

(After each phrase, all repeat "Most Blessed Sacrament").

Thus ends the devil's prayer to the Sacrament.

Augusta then commemorates the dead as follows: "You know that at the beginning of this year our brother José Rivas(Ladera) died. All of us, principally the brothers who are dancing, must remember him and carry on their clothing the badge of his memory, carry their

little black strip of mourning, because you know that, he was a captain, and one of the old captains. We, the dancing brothers must remember José Ladera, together with my mourning for that captain, and in homage to him, I brought these little verses, which go like this:

It was in this year of 84
with real sadness
by decree of the lord
Jose Ladera was taken from us

He is already in paradise
where the good people are
on Earth he left memories
where he was captain

With devotion and respect
he always carries his ornament
for him his adoration
it was the divine sacrament

He never failed to be present
in the House of prayer *
even though he no longer danced
he fulfilled his devotion.

He was a man of good deeds
he fulfilled his devotional duty
He stopped doing this in life
when God took him away

Good-bye dear José
my brother in religion
we ask the Eternal Father
to give you his benediction
Let Him hear your penance
let Him give His absolution
so that in heaven you find
your sacred protection." (1984)

*The House of prayer is the Holy House called also Rest House.

All make the sign of the cross and pray the Hail Mary and then recite a popular and well known prayer to the mother of God:

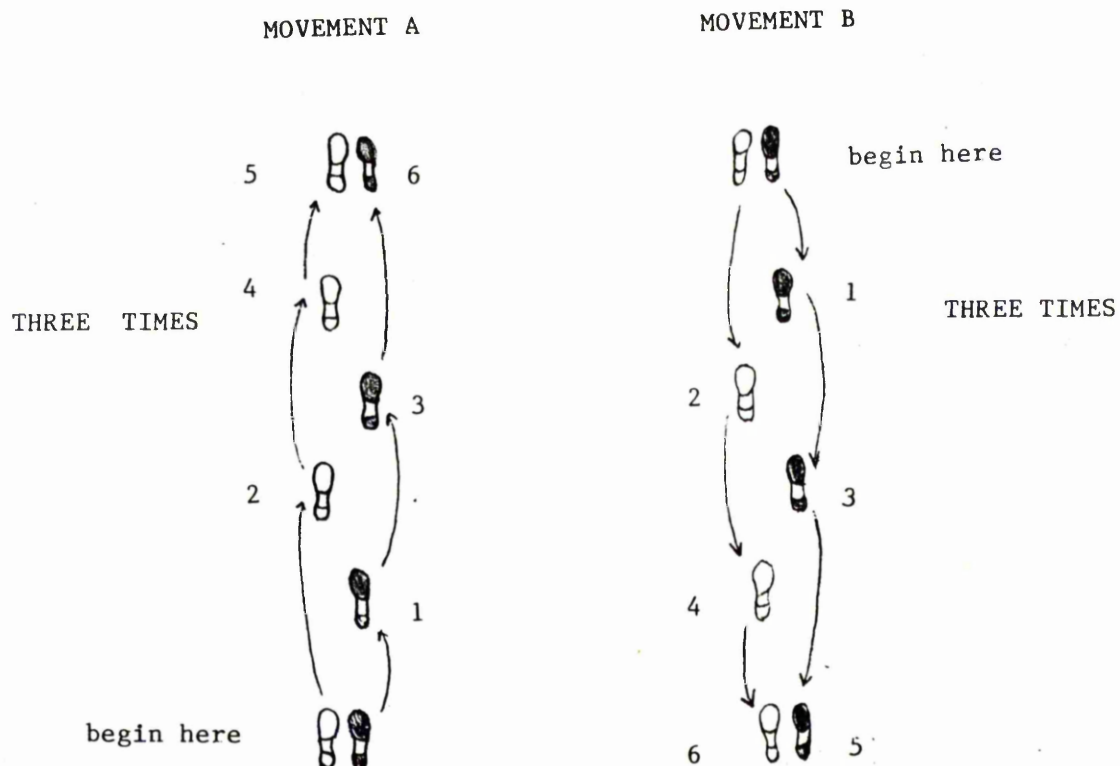
"Blessed be thy purity and so be it eternally// since a true God delights in such graceful beauty / to you celestial princess/ virgin, sacred Mary/ I offer you on this day / soul, life and heart/ look upon us with compassion/ do not leave us / Mother mine/ and give us your most holy blessing."

They finish with the following song:

"Little stars in the heavens/ let us all go to adore/ Jesus in the Sacrament/ who is placed on the altar/ Don't cry, Jesus, don't cry / for you will make us cry/ for the children of this town/ want to console you/ Little stars in the heavens/ let us all go adore / Jesus in the Sacrament/ who is placed on the altar/ little flowers of the valleys / come all to watch/ to see if with our aroma/ we can make Him happy" (Corpus Christi.1984).

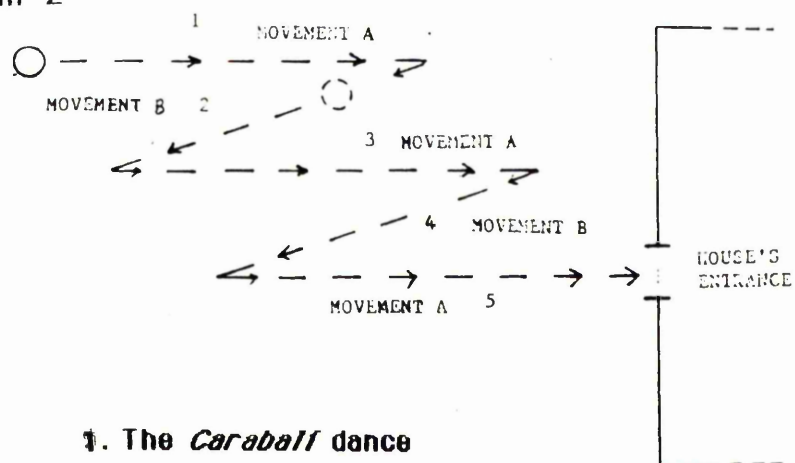
After the recitation of prayers and songs the Corpus Christi devils at the Holy House dance the *mojiganga*, (44) thus exhibiting their skills in the dance to the rest of the devils, and other people of Chuao. (Diagram 1) This dance consists of the movement of the feet forwards and backwards, "you take a step forward with the right foot, then with the left foot, and then again with the right foot, dancing towards the altar of the Blessed Sacrament . Then using the same step and space that you have covered going forward, you do the same going backward,three times." (Juan José Herrera, 1988) This type of *Mojiganga* is performed in the Holy House. Through such a display status of the dancers is raised in the view of the others. This means that the better you dance the greater respect you have from your brothers and also the people of Chuao, who recognize and admire the good dancers. It is also true that behind the dance is the rendering of the devotion and respect to the Most Blessed Sacrament. "The *Mojiganga* is the dance of joy, of happiness because it means God forgave their sins and they have already accepted in the kingdom of God." (Augusta 1989)(45)(Plate 30,p.195)

Diagram 1



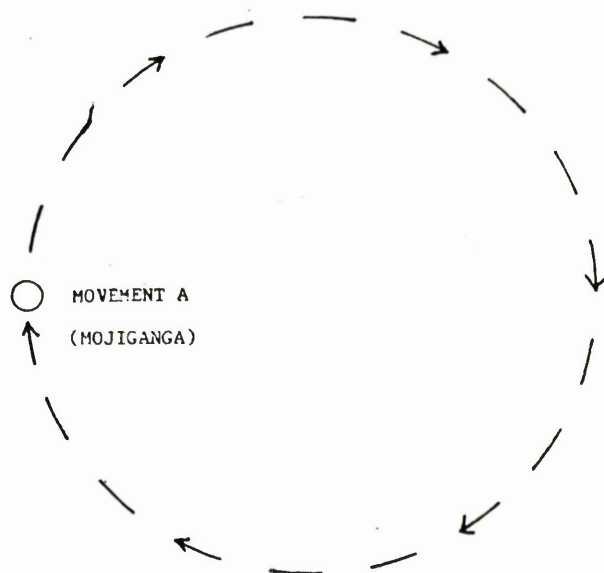
Mojiganga Movement A followed by movement B. This ***Mojiganga*** is performed in the churchyard and in the Holy House.

Diagram 2



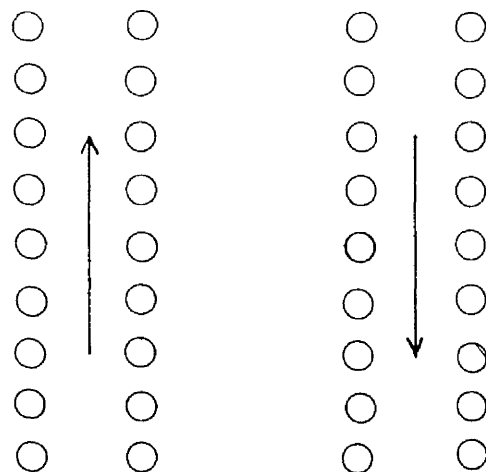
1. The *Caraball* dance

Diagram 3



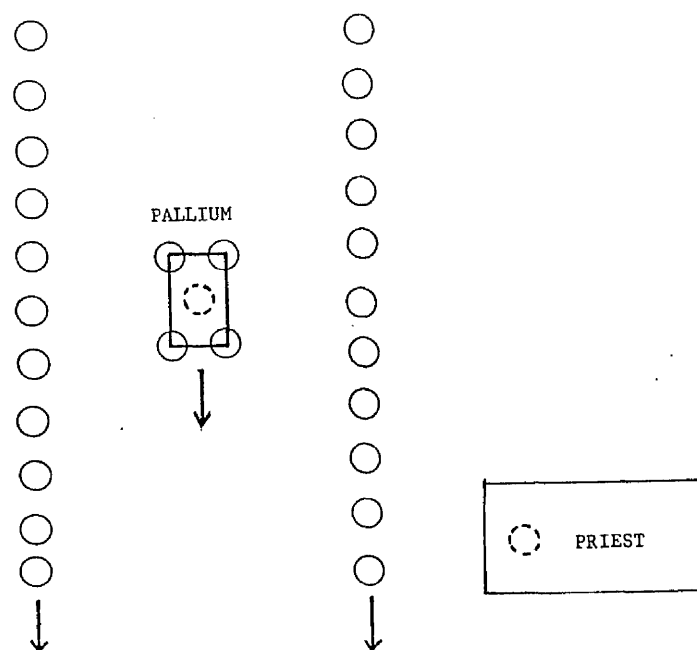
2. *Mojiganga* dancing inside the houses

Diagram 4



1. Up- Street and Down- Street dance

Diagram 5



2. The *dancita*

Visiting the homes of the members of Corpus Christi

After the ritual in the Holy House the devils come out, and visit the homes of the different members of Corpus Christi, including their own. On route to the houses they perform a free dance called *calle arriba, calle abajo* (up-street, down-street), (Plate 36, 1, 2, p. 225) "but always setting out on the right foot, they dance any steps they want, just as long as they keep the rhythm, which is absolutely essential. In this dance, the mask covers the face and the whip is placed on the ground. The rattle in the right hand is played along with the drum." (Juan José Herrera, 1988). (Diagram 4, 208)

The visits are made according to a hierarchical order, the first house to be visited is the house of the dead Martín Gutierrez, who was the first Captain of Corpus Christi, according to people's memory. Then they continue visiting the houses of other dead captains. After that they go to the first captain's house, then the second captain's, and so on, up to and including the homes of members who for some reason have not been able to dance that year, or of members who have died but were important and whose family carries on the devotion.

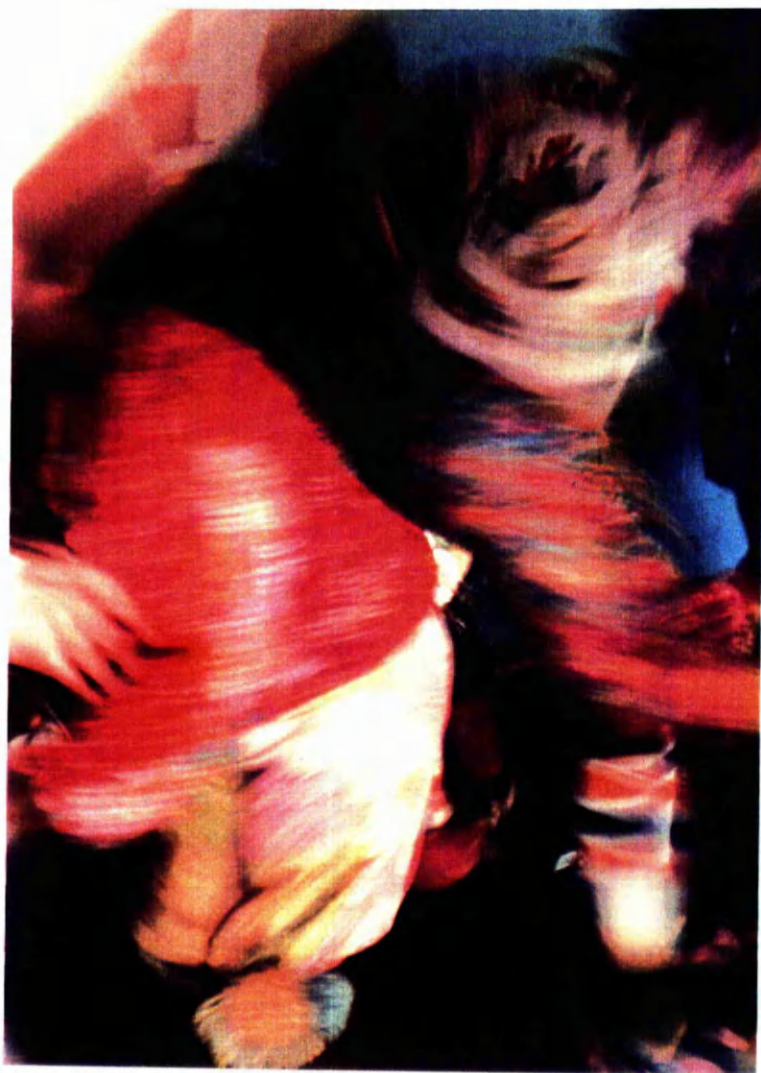
At the entrance of each house the devils perform the *Calabari* Dance. (Diagram 2) This dance is as the *Mojiganga*, an expression of happiness of being together. The sense is of natural enjoyment than a dance directed in honour of the Sacrament. In the *Carabali* dance the mask covers the face and they dance forward and backward, jumping high with the beat of the *caja* which occasionally speeds up, and changes rhythm, thus giving to the devil dancer the signal to enter into the house. (Plate 28, 2, p. 193) There they dance the *Mojiganga* (Diagram 3, p. 207) slightly differently from the one for the Holy House, this time in a circle beginning on the right side in a forward direction and with the right foot, not interrupting the movement. (Plate 33, 2, p. 210) The owners of the houses give the devils drinks, mostly rum or *guarapita* (made with rum and some fruit juice as lemon, passionfruit or pineapple) and food.

The mask is never worn in the Holy House and in the houses, but left leaning against the walls with the whip. The music used for all these dances is played with the *caja*, (drum). As a general rule in the dancing, the line of the back appears fairly rigid, it is kept



1. Chácara and Pio watching
one of the elders teaching the
dancita. 1985

2. Devils dancing *mojiganga* in a house. 1984



straight and inclined forward from the hips, with slightly flexed knees. This posture provides a solid base and allows the dancer to maintain close contact with the earth. In Chuao, dancing is inseparable from drumming. One criterion to mark out a good dancer is that he understands the musical structure of the drum and matches his stepping and the sound of the rattle to the rhythm of it.

The better the performance, the greater the feeling that they have completely fulfilled their obligations as believers and brothers of the Corpus Christi . This is not only valid for the performance in the Holy House or the dances of the houses, it is a general view applied to the different parts of the whole festivity.

The *caimito* tree

During the afternoon (about 4 or 5 p.m.) the dancers go to the *caimito* tree to have a rest, before returning to the festivity. At that time the Reading of Edicts can also take place.

It is interesting to note the important role played by the *caimito* tree in the rituals, as it determines the boundary of safety for the devils. (Plate 34, 1, p.212) Once the devils go beyond the tree, they are no longer protected. This *caimito* is a very ancient tree, and the only one of this type in Chuao. It has a big hole in the trunk, in which people of Chuao throw the serpents that they kill on the plantation. María Tecla and Augusta once said to me, when we were going to visit the cultivated fields of Justo Franco and passed it by " It is a very special tree, it is very old, it always remains the same, ever green, and its hole in the trunk has been eating serpents for many, many years. We do not know how many, we think it needs to eat them to be strong and powerful"(1989). They did not say anything more about the tree, but their comments can be seen to emphasise the importance of the tree not only in relation to the devils festivity, but also in relation to other festivals, including the celebration of the Holy Week in Chuao. Every day during this week the leaves of the *caimito* tree are scattered by people to the ground along the route of the procession. They held a different procession each day to commemorate Holy week. On Good Friday, they perform the meeting of the Virgin and Christ, the image of the Sorrowing Mary



1. The Overseer's mask resting in the *caimito* tree (the sacred tree).1984



2. The boundaries of the safe space. 1984

and the Holy Sepulchre on the Cross of the Calvary of Chuao (Map 8) (Plate, 8, 1, p.33) The same kind of procession is performed at 5 a.m. on Easter Sunday between the Immaculate Conception and Christ. (Plate 8, 2, p.33) The difference between both processions lies in the songs and attitudes of people. The first, is an expression of sadness, the second, of joy, but in both everybody takes leaves from the *caimito* tree, exactly at the time of the meetings. People of Chuao said: "The *caimito* leaves and the soil taken at this time have certain power, they protect the houses, blessing them, and it is also thought to help the children to walk." (Holy Week, 1985).

The reading of Edicts

Within the context of the festivity of Corpus Christi the devils use the reading of edicts or *lectura de bandos* (see note 36) as a punishment especially on young women and children. The devil-accuser points out any reprehensible acts committed by the person. The punishment consists of making public private matters which can bring ridicule upon the accused, or cause fear. Usually, those who find out that they are going to be the subject of an edict run away and hide. The devils have to look for them ; when they find them they take them prisoner. The victims are not allowed to escape, and must repeat every phrase aloud, immediately after it is uttered by the devil. The reading of edicts is mainly used to punish children and adolescents (boys and girls) who have misbehaved during the year, but also sometimes young women. The interested mother informs one of the devils of the misdeed, and they then proceed to search out the culprit to carry out the punishment.

Thus the reading of edicts acts as part of societal control, for no one finds public revelation of private faults agreeable, and in this sense the act is a sort of punishment. Although the reading of the edict is still practised, the act no longer carries with it the damning force (a strong way of expressing anger) of times past. In other words, today the devils read the edicts more to have fun, than to punish people. The reading of edicts is mainly to the children, but also to young women, but not to men.

As Nestor informed: "The reading of edicts is done by the devils, but not the captains or the overseer. The reading of edicts can be held on Wednesday or Thursday . The devils take the children

into their care and make jokes of them. I, as Overseer do not read it. I do not know why, but don't you see that the devils are much more bitter and bad than us, the hierarchy, the captains have to maintain the control of the festivity, therefore we cannot read edicts, this is a task for the other devils." (1989) Then he gave an example of how the devils warn children for the misdeed of bed wetting. They look for 'the *batea* '(a wooden plate used in kitchens in Venezuela to put vegetables, roots, and fruits on) and they take sharp knives " to cut off the little balls" of the children, who "piss off" their beds. The 'batea ' with vegetables and roots means that to make the soup only the little balls are lacking. The children experiencing this threat never wet their bed again. To read these edicts the devils can sit over the back of the children. Sometimes a drunk devil does not know what he is doing and can really hurt a little one, but in this case the captains intervene and free the child. As you see we have to watch the devils all the time." In Maria Tecla's childhood the devils were terrible, but the children take their vengeance. In those days, they (the children) used to go to a place *La toma de Palo Grande*. There they found a type of branch, called *picatón* which produces a strong itching when you touch it. The children would then throw the *picatón* to the devils and run away quickly. In my childhood I did not do this type of bad thing to the devils, I was frightened of them, and when the time of Corpus Christi came I disappeared, went out my house at 5 o'clock in the morning and came back very late, 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening to escape from the devils. Now it is totally different; you can see seventy devils who are dancing in the festivity, and hundreds of children following them."(1989).

María Tecla laughed loudly when I told her what Néstor had said about her time. She added : "Look, my love the place in where Saint John the Baptist stays in the church now was formerly the church belfry and it was decorated with a number of skulls, (In former times some persons were buried there, but she did not know more about it). This place also was full of wasps. The devils, who knew that, put us in there and they then played the bells to disturb the wasps, which came over us. Therefore we said whatever the devils wanted to avoid the wasps, whether it was truth or not. The devils can read the edicts wherever they want and at any time during the Corpus Christi festivity. The reading of edicts is done by the

devils in order to force people to say things that they have not committed, anything they want people to accuse themselves of." (María Tecla. 1989). Augusta remembers: "One year Tamakún and Eustoquio, they were 'bitter', reading the edict to a boy saying : 'Farewell dear boy, why do you run away when your mother calls you, because she wants to hit me, she wants to hit me, because I wet the bed.' That was comic. Ay, look Carmen Elena, for example when I was a child I was afraid of the devils, I used to wet the bed, then when I heard that Corpus Christi is coming, Ay, I tortured myself thinking of the devils, because at that time the devils caused fear. The mothers said to the children before the festivity, look I will tell to the devils that you are bed wetting, and when Corpus Christi came they said it and then, all the devils falling on you, calling you, crying and making moan (grudge, grumbling) under their masks: uhuu, ejemm uuh. The present devils do not cry like those I knew" (Augusta 1989)

Things have obviously changed over the years, Amado, a townsman, tells us: "Because it wasn't like it is now, when all those boys go around with the devils. In the past, we could not come after the devils fell, you could not come into town because you had to avoid the devils which were very bad. They were too bad. They chased and grabbed you and took you to read edict and they obliged you to say something that you did not want to say, they beat you up with hard blows" (1985). Maritza Tagliafierro adds: "In my case, my son did a lot of naughty things, and I would tell the devils. Then they, on the day they fell down, had it in mind that I had complained to them. They would then come to look for him and punished him. The children would run to the forest so that they could not catch them". (1985)

In those days, one's mother did not meddle, the devils grabbed the children and did what they wanted and the mother did not even interfere, because if she did, she also got a lash." (1985)

In 1984, Juan de Mata reads the edicts to an unidentified woman (the devil shake the rattle, and when she does not answer, he hits her with it):

"Nobody will accuse me,
nobody will accuse me,
because I want to know,

because I want to know.

Why that man is my misfortune?

Why that man is my misfortune?

Such a proud wedding,

such a proud wedding.

Since she was the one I admire,

since she was the one I admire,

because today she cries with me

because today she cries with me."

The reading of the edict for "Gordo" (Fatty), the son of Juana Chema:

"Good-bye, my dear Pulia,

good-bye, my dear Pulia.

I tell Eulogia a lie,

I tell Eulogia a lie,

because I am going to meet that woman,

because I am going to meet that woman." (Corpus Christi, 1984).

To sum up the reading of edicts is performed by any of the devils, except the captains, during Wednesday Eve and Thursday Corpus Christi day. The main subjects are children, adolescents (boys and girls) and young women, no men are involved. Apparently, from what has been heard and transcribed, the reading of edicts amounts to a revelation of reprehensible deeds that people have committed, or not as the case may be, but often related to women's love life. They belong to a specific context, so with the passing of the years, it is very difficult to understand the meaning of any particular edict. The reading of edicts to children, particularly deal with the difficulty in learning not to bed wet. It is thus one means of establishing moral rules for a child, and of reinforcing the authority of parents.

In the past the reading of edicts was held in high esteem, but today the previous unquestioned authority has been weakened and the relationships established between the devils and the community tend to be more horizontal (egalitarian) in nature.

The *Velorio*, Vigil of the devils, the night before Corpus Christi

Velorio is not to be confused with "a wake for the dead", a common usage in the Spanish Caribbean. Here, *Velorio* refers to the entertainment held in the evening of the eve of a Saint's day. *Velorio* in general, belongs to a common pattern of the Venezuelan popular religious manifestations .

On Wednesday evening, the devils, the people of Chuao and outsiders, gather on the edge of the town just before the fork in the road. There, the altar of the *Velorio* has been set up. (Plate 35, 1, 2, p. 218) It consists of: a rectangular structure made of bamboo cane with a zinc roof. It has three walls as the front is open and without a door. The place looks like a caney (log cabin). The three walls are covered with sheets in different colours. The entrance is decorated with bougainvillea and palm leaves. These same kind of flowers hang along the sheets. Against the back wall is placed the altar of the devils, consisting of three crosses of different sizes, that are made of wood and covered by coloured papers (yellow, red, blue, and turquoise). In front of the cross many white candles are lit. On the floor, between two crosses leans a devil mask. Benches and chairs are there for the musicians, singers and the public. Natalia Ladera and Yolanda Almenar made the altars in 1984, the latter being, Augusta's niece. The devils do not wear their costume to the *Velorio*. The drummers and singers play and sing throughout the night, until early in the morning, the first captain, Jesus Franco, orders the devils to assemble in the churchyard for the first prayers of the Corpus Christi day.

The *Velorio* has its own dynamism where singers, poets and drummers enter it by singing, reciting poems, and beating the drums. They go out when tired and come back later to participate again. They drink throughout the night and the more popular drinks are rum, beer and *guarapita*. (The most famous *guarapitas* in Chuao are made by Natalia Ladera).

The *Velorio* is an interplay between two types of oral expression: collective and individual poetic compositions. One, the *Fulia*, is a kind of popular poem in which a soloist leads and singing the verses, and other singers representing the chorus. The participants, the singers are called *fulüistas* (singers of *Fulias*). When



1. The place of the
Velorio. 1984



2. The *Velorio* of the
devils. 1984

a singer finishes a song he (she) is replaced by another, who develops the same plot, or can change the subject, giving a signal to the musicians, who change the rhythm.

The singing is accompanied by various musical instruments: the *tambora* is a small single membrane drum that is played with two sticks or the hands. The players hang the *tambora* from their shoulders when they play it in a standing position, but when they sit the *tambora* is placed between the legs. The *cuatro* is a four stringed small guitar. The *furruco* is a drum in the shape of a barrel with one membrane and an incision in the middle of it. In this, a wooden stick is introduced that moves up and down producing a unique variety of musical sounds. The *charrasca* is a kind of instrument made of a piece of wood or metal, with incisions on it, played with one stick. Another type of *charrasca*, consist of a piece of wood, with metallic pieces, such as bottle tops, fastened to it with nails, and it is played by shaking. The players sometimes also play the guitar, or improvise instruments to make music with. For example, a pewter plate beaten with a metallic spoon. Men play the drums and women are the soloists of the *fulía*.

The other poetic composition of the *Velorio* is the *Décima*, which is recited by its composer, called a *decimista* (the person who make the *Décima* . There is no musical accompaniment. (A *Décima* is a Spanish stanza composed of 10 octosyllabic lines). The poets in the year 1984 were Julián Castillo, Juan Damasio and the principal singers of *fulías* were Natalia Ladera, La Vieja, Yolanda Almenar, Berta Aché, together with other women of the community of *El Paraíso* (a coffee plantation situated up on the mountain, which surrounds Chuao). The drummers were Francisco Franco, Berta Aché's son, Julio Bacalao, Claudio Franco, Demétrio, together with other men of the community who were changed throughout the night, in order to give each person some rest. The information that was given indicated that the same people actively participate every year in the *Velorio* of the devils.

As established, the *Velorio* started with a *Fulía* :

Ay la ra la la la

Good-by, Dove, good- by

The day i die, the day I die,

ay, la ra la ra la la la

I will have my mourners

But all my friends, but all my friends

Say quickly, Manuel Ladera, here comes your liquor

here comes your liquor

(Chorus)

In the name of God I begin, Manuel Ladera, because I hadn't't begun,

(chorus)

Because I hadn't begun

(chorus)

By the sign of the cross, by the sign of the cross, since a praised One exists,*

Chorus

Since a praised One exists. * (One, in this context, means God)

One exists, Oh God

chorus

Most blessed cross of May, little messenger dove, since a praised One exists

chorus

so as to come find you

chorus

Most blessed Trinity, Oh God

chorus

How pretty they dressed you, little messenger dove, the little toes of your feet

chorus

the little toes of your feet

chorus

one, two, three, four, five six, seven eight, nine, and ten

chorus

seven, eight, nine and ten, Oh God

chorus

On your neck a medal, on your neck a medal

chorus

Ricardo Liendo, Manuel Ladera, and in your hair a rose

chorus

the day I die, the day I die, who will remember me, Ricardo Liendo, Manuel
Ladera and the water that I drank,

chorus

Most blessed cross of May, cross of May, Ricardo Liendo, Manuel ladera, who
put you on that table

chorus

who put you on that table

chorus

who put you on that table

chorus

all those who are here, all those who are here

Ricardo Liendo, Manuel Ladera, because they are paying a promise

chorus

every time I look at you, every time I look at you, Ricardo Liendo, Manuel Ladera
I want to cry

Chorus (For other *fulías* see appendix II,D, p423)

This *fulía* is a chant of salutation to the Blessed Sacrament, and the reaffirmation of the poet's belief. The poet as a creator, also has the power of blessing the Cross of May, (On the third of May in the majority of Venezuelan towns people render homage to the Cross to obtain good crops. This festivity is another example of the blending of cultures, in this case the symbol of the Cross of Catholicism coincides with an Indian belief, which also used the cross as one of its images). The importance of former captains like Ricardo Liendo and Manuel Ladera is pointed out by the verses. The poet also reaffirms, through his words, the relevance of the *Velorio* performance in the Corpus Christi festivity as another way for the believers and the devils to comply with the promises they offered to the Sacrament.

Julian Castillo 's *Décima*

1. I have come to greet, I greet the Holy Cross and the Imperial Crown,
2. they are the reigns of glory, which can be see on this altar, they are lovely
and pretty,
3. I greet the *fulia* singers, blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel,
4. clear up their memory, so I can start with my story,
5. because I got here this afternoon, I wear the sign to pray The our Father,
6. I have to bless with words The divine, because I began singing,

7. and with no argument have to greet the heavenly choir,
8. I have also come to see if there are sprays of flowers,
9. if not, I will buy some which have purple science,
10. and I with my fine science, Greet the Holy Cross.

These two types of expression, the *Fulía* and *Décima* are the offering to the Holy Cross . The name of Manuel Ladera appears in the *Fulía* and as I explained before, he was one of the most important men in the devils' training. He was a kind of medicine man, who prepared the relics of the devils, and taught them different aspects of the Corpus Christi ritual specifically the secret prayers.

The *Décima* prepared by Julián Castillo is a presentation of himself as a poet and a believer in the Most Blessed Sacrament . It is also a chant to glorify the Cross, the Sacrament and other elements which make up the *Velorio* : the altar, the singers, the heavenly chorus. In the *Velorios* performance in Venezuela, the poets always start with a greeting. They commence the performance in a particularly self-confident tone, which defines their prestige as *decimistas* .

The next *Décima* was composed by Juan Damasio, he is well known in the community as one of the better *decimistas* of the area. He lives in *El Paraíso*, and comes to Chuao for the festivities. He is ninety years old. The *Décima* cannot be fully explained because it is made up of idiomatic expressions and Venezuelan refrains but in this *Décima* he tries to express his anger with some of the foolish opinion being expressed about him. He is affirming his lack of fear of anybody or anything. He uses the image of a serpent to mark out hostile people, (a serpent personifies evil and danger) but at the same time the use of this dangerous symbol serves to demonstrate his courage, because he has no fear; and he can control the situation.

Decima

1. River current, today I beg you,
2. my God the toils I have, I offend no one in this town
3. That I love and even though
4. I be unknown and when I can say
5. a serpent that only if I look at it,
6. nothing stops me, nor any barrier

- 7.I would take off my hat,
- 8.my greeting in general,
- 9.and even dare to take a walk
- 10.when I am engaged I am a bit naughty .

During the festivity of the *Velorio*, the principal figures will be the best known singers of *Décimas* and *Fulías* in Chuao. The devils participate only in the chorus. "In general the devils are not soloists, not due to any prohibition, but because they have not dedicated themselves to developing their skills as singers" (Augusta 1987).

The *Velorio* of the devils has always existed, it used to be prepared by the late Guadalupe Chávez, and before, the *Velorio* was held in the houses of the dead Simoncito Lugo and Maria Casilda Liendo." (Augusta 1987)

"The devils come to the *Velorio*, with their relics, hidden under their shirts. Then in the night the devils are there, they drink, they sing if they want, but there is no dancing to the drum, it is forbidden." (Augusta, 1987).

In Chuao the *Velorio* of the devils is not only a time to fulfil promises but also to enjoy oneself, to express ideas, beliefs, feelings and love. Underlying the drinks, meals and music there is a deep religious significance that renders homage to the Sacrament.

The day of Corpus Christi: Thursday

At five in the morning, on the day of Corpus Christi the first captain, Jesus Franco, gets all the devils together, in the centre of the town, the streets, around the church and the Holy House (Map 8, p187), to safeguard them and the Corpus Christi festivity, in case of the 'real devil' (Satan) tries to interfere with the Corpus Christi ritual. (46) (Doctrine p.146)

The reason, for this is explained by María Tecla. " The devils don't get up at five in the morning anywhere now, but before, it wasn't at five, but at four, when the devils had to be in the street. As we believed, on Corpus Christi Thursday the 'real devil' can enter here, if he finds the town empty, he will take possession of the town, but then, if the devils are in the street, he cannot do it, because

many devils have already taken possession of the town. That is the reason the devils have to go out very early. In the past, when it was near four in the morning, the captain went around giving out whips. If they were still in bed they turned over and if you were still sleepy, when you came out they whipped you hard. (María Tecla, 1984) (47)

On Thursday the devils have their tails untied and the Captain's are tied. They play an important role in the festivity: The overseer, the first, second, third captains and the *Sayona* have to have their tails untied on Wednesday to be able to issue authority over the devils. They in turn have to have their tails tied. The significance of the devils tying tails demonstrates that they have not yet received the blessing of God. A devil with his tail untied will be punished with a crack of the whip by the captain. However on the day of Corpus Christi, the roles change and the devils untie their tails and all the captains tie theirs. When the captains tie their tails to show they recognize that the devils have had the blessing and they are not totally free to punish them. On Thursday, the captains and devils have more parity, and it has even been known that a devil can smack a whip at his captain for having his tail still tied.

All the devils go to the church, where they meditate and pray. Then they visit the Corpus Christi brothers repeating the same dances as the day before. During the morning the captain of alms, Pablo Borges stands at the door to collect the offerings from the devils and from others in the community who wish to contribute. According to María Tecla, alms must always be given, "for this is not something ordained by men, but of divine origin." (María Tecla, 1985) The money collected is mainly used to cover the expenses (such as the payment of the priest, drinks, food, chocolate, bread, flowers, candles, fireworks) of the festivity or for any other events related to the cult of the Most Blessed Sacrament. (Plate 37, p. 226)

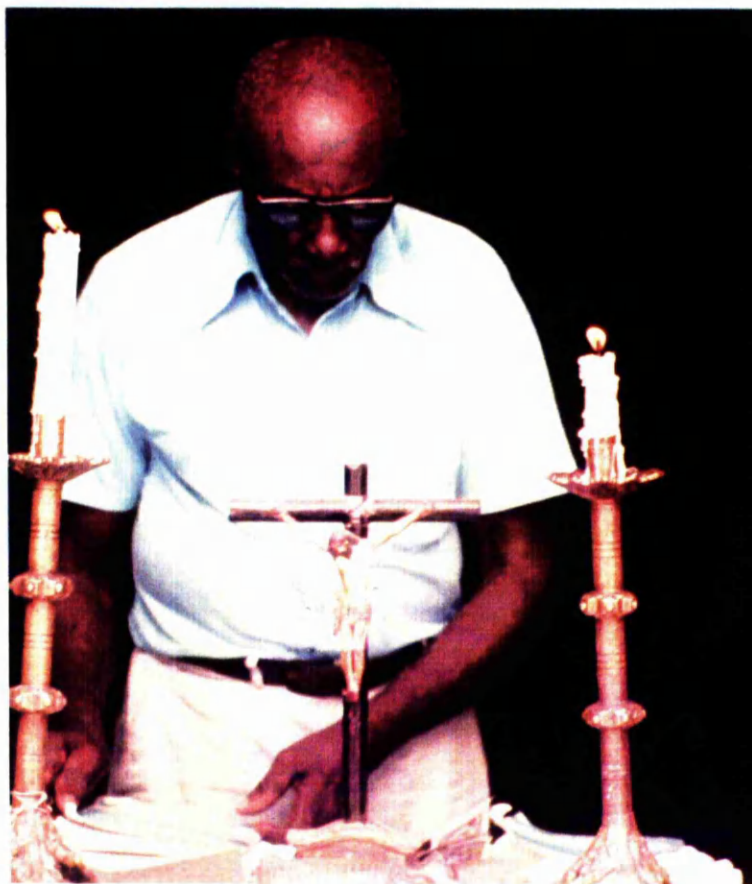
At twelve noon, the devils return to the church, where they continue praying and a solemn mass is held. In 1984, the Mass was not held, because the priest did not attend. Instead, Augusta and María Tecla led prayers in honour of the Most Blessed Sacrament, even though the monstrance with the sacrament was not there. The prayers included the Our Father and The Apostle's Creed. Then María Tecla reciting the Doctrine (see p. 140) which relates to the origin of Corpus Christi. Augusta pointed out the importance of an



1. The devils led by the first Captain dancing *Calle Arriba*.
1984



2. Devils dancing *Calle Arriba*. 1984



1. Venancio Bolívar. The Captain of Alms, waiting for the devils.
1980



2. Pablo Borges . The Captain of Alms received the payment of a devil.
Augusta Chávez observing it. 1984

awareness the dangerous nature of the religion of Corpus Christi. The devils have to do penance, which lasts for about two hours. They have to fall down in the church in three lines, each one led by the captains. They stay on the floor without moving until this part of the celebration comes to an end.(Plate 38,p.228)

If a priest is available the Corpus Christi festivity includes the Mass in which some of the devils will take communion, and women will sing. If no priest is available no mass can take place but the people sing nevertheless, led by Augusta and María Tecla.

Afterwards, the devils come out of the Church and continue dancing forwards and backwards without turning their backs to the Church's altar. Then they leave the churchyard to perform the *up-street,down-street* dance. (Plate 36,p.225) They then visit the houses of other members of the society. Again they follow the same order as the day before, but visiting the houses they did not have time to go on Wednesday the Eve. Some of them, with the permission of their leader, go to the *caimito* tree to have a rest.

The preparation of the altars

Early in the afternoon women of the community led by Augusta make up six altars, (there is no a fixed number,there could be more but not less than the list below). (48) They are made of the leaves of the coconut tree, woven to form arches, which are stuck in the ground. Under these arches, there is a table, on which is placed a cross, pictures of different saints, flowers and candles. The decoration varies depending upon the taste and the beliefs of the person involved in the making of the altar. For example, in the house of Edita and Maritza (formerly Martín Gutiérrez house) they place an image of the Virgin of the Mount of Carmel on the altar, because she is the object of their devotion. Others may put the picture of José Gregorio Hernández, the Virgin of Coromoto, Holy Trinity, Sacred Heart of Jesus, and so on.

The altars line the route of the procession, which starts in Royal Street and continues through Saint John Street. (Map 8, p.) The altars are put in front of the following places: first, the house in which Juan Bautista Liendo (the last slave of Chuao) lived, second, the Cross where the *Velorio* takes place, on the edge of town, (Augusta said: "the altar in this place is a very important one because



1. Thursday, Corpus Christi day, 1984



2. The devils doing penitence inside the church, 1984

the *Velorio* represents the religion of the devils"); third, Augusta's house, which is at the beginning of Saint John Street, fourth, Hernández's house (which was formerly Martín Gutiérrez house), fifth, Candida Bacalao's house, and the sixth in front of the three crosses of the Calvary. (Map 8, p.187)

The procession

At five in the afternoon everyone gathers in the church in order to start the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The priest comes out with the monstrance containing the Sacrament, under the pallium which is carried by four married men of Chuao. (Plate 39,1,p.230) When a priest is not there, the man who takes his place, as happened in 1984, has to be a single man, neither being married nor having any stable relationship with a woman at the time of the festivity. Two children representing angels, and holding candles, go forward on each side of the pallium: "the angels protect the procession and the Corpus Christi devils because they are the symbol of the Kingdom of God, the devil cannot enter where the angels are, he is afraid of angels. So, with them the procession is well protected." (Augusta 1989). (Plate 40,1,2,231) At this point, the *caja* is no longer played. The musical accompaniment is the *cuatro*.. The *dancita* is played by one of the principal musicians from Chuao Iginio Hernández, who is a married man. (One must be married or single to play this part)*. In the *dancita* the devils carry a whip under their arm, and the face is uncovered with the mask in the 'horns forward' position, i.e. worn over the back of the head (Plate 39,1,p.230) The step of the *dancita* is tapped with the feet, and also jumped, but with delicate movements, shaking the rattle to the rhythm of the *cuatro* music. (Plate 33,1,p.210) "One starts with the right foot and, following the rhythm, one takes three steps to the right and three to the left, with the right hand one plays the rattle and under the left arm one carries the whip. The body accompanies the movement of the feet ". (Juan José Herrera, 1988). (Diagram 5,p.208) This dance is performed, on Corpus Christi, when the procession of the Blessed Sacrament sets out.

* i.e. Not living in an adulterous union.

The procession Thursday afternoon. 1980



1. The devils dancing the *dancita* in honour of the Sacrament. 1980



2. The prayers of the devils in front of an altar. 1980



1. A low-ranking devil acting as priest. Procession 1984.



2. The angels lead the procession. María Tecla follows the devil's priest

The procession stops at each of the altars where they chant and pray.(Plate 39,2, p.230)The prayers include the 'Creed' and 'Our Father'. Solo parts are sung by the women, and the devils sing the choruses. The songs they sing include:

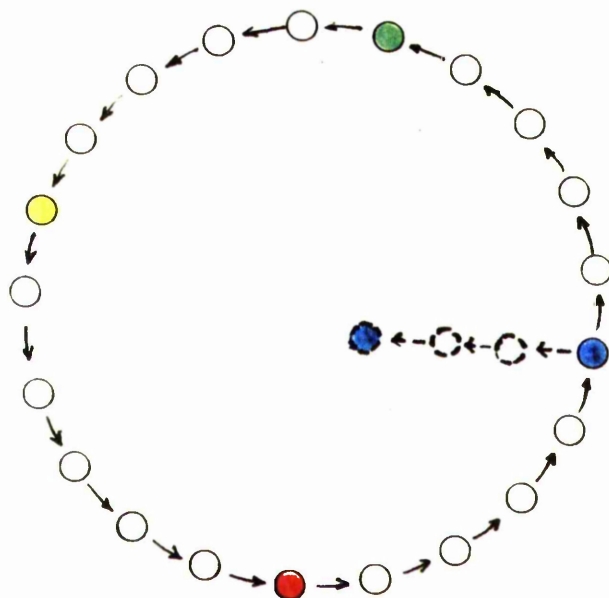
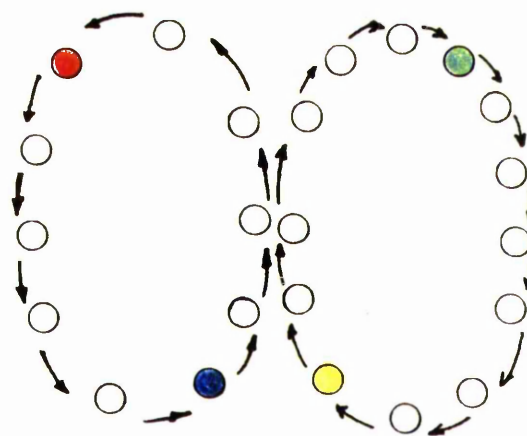
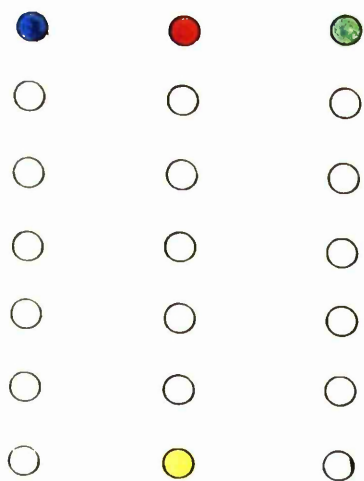
Sing us, Sing us, Glory to the Most Blessed Sacrament, Holy Heart, Lord of my life, Little stars of the sky, Reign Jesus for ever, and the last verse: In our country, in our land, the nation which belongs to Virgin Mary .

After all the altars have been visited, the procession returns to the church, where the Blessed Sacrament is brought in by the priest, or in his absence, a picture of the chalice (Plate 40,2, p.) is brought in by the person who acts as priest, as the symbol of the Blessed Sacrament. The ritual finishes with more prayers at the altar, ending with hymn *Glory to you Lord*.

Then, the devils come out of the church dancing the *Mojiganga* as they did at the Holy House. The *Sayona*, as she goes out, makes a bow in front of the church door and then she leads the last dance of the day. (Diagram 6,p.233)This dance is performed in the churchyard and is a mixture of several dance patterns. The dancers form a circle making a colourful human ribbon and continue to dance creating an increasingly complex rhythmic dance pattern until they form a large cross, moving forward and backward and to both sides, right and left, around the churchyard. It appears like a gigantic dancing cross that expresses their beliefs in and adoration of the most Blessed Sacrament. (Plates 41,42, p.234, 235)

The major part of the ritual has then finished, and the devils go in different directions, visiting houses or going home. Later, in the night, Julio Bacalao with the *caja* starts to call the devils again to the farewell of Corpus Christi. " At one time this was something very special, the devils, as the *caja* beat : 'Corpus Christi is finishing, Corpus Christi is finishing, Corpus Christi is finishing', all danced, fell to the ground, beating the ground, and crying desperately until the *caja* stopped. Nowadays they do the farewell, but it seems to me that the present devils do not know how to cry." (Augusta,1989).

Diagram 6



- LA SAYONA
- FIRST CAPTAIN
- SECOND CAPTAIN
- OVERSEER
- DEVILS

The last dance.
The dancing Cross

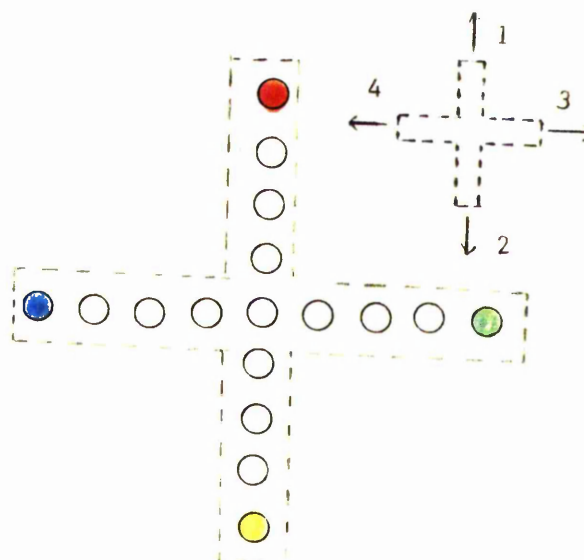
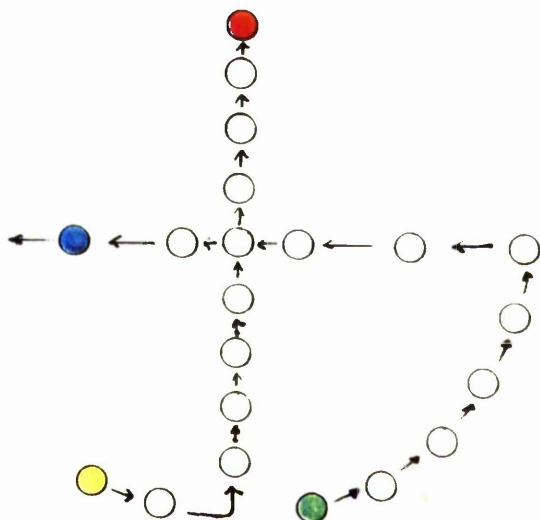


Plate 41



1. After the procession the last dance leading by the *Sayona* . 1984



2. Detail of the last dance. 1984



1. The devils dancing to form a cross. 1984



2. The dancing cross. 1984

The farewell to Corpus Christi, finishes in Saint John Street in front of the Holy House, where the *cajero* stores the *caja* until next year. In this way, after nightfall, the day of Corpus Christi comes to an end.

"Everyone, every town lives its own religion, here we live this one and we cannot get away from this religion, looking for modernism. Each one has his own way of praying. This is ours."(Augusta 1985)(Plate 43,p.237)

On Friday, the devils who wish to do so dance for half a day. Afterwards, a *sancocho* (p.180) is prepared by the devils themselves or by the women who have arranged to do the cooking which is held in the shade of the *caimito* tree.

In the Octave of Corpus Christi, in 1985, the devils danced again and, also read edicts, but this was an isolated case. María Tecla said : "the celebration in the Octave is finished and 'she added' before we used to pray a *novena*, (nine days, commencing next evening after Corpus Christi day) and to gather in the Holy House and pray there but when Augusta decided to move into Choroni, and the devils did not come to the *novena*, only a few old women and men, we decided not to continue this part of the cult, because the young people did not want to pray, they wanted only to enjoy themselves.(49) From the time of Jesus Franco until now, the last *novena* was held by Inés Bolívar, one of the old devil dancers, but I do not remember when was the last one .The people who came to the *novena* were Cándida Bacalao, Emperatriz Hernández, Jesús Franco, José Rivas. In it we prayed the rosary to the Virgin Mary and the Most Blessed Sacrament." (1989)

Prohibitions

It is interesting to point out the various kinds of prohibitions that can be found in the oral traditions of Chuao. There are many stories, which have to do with transgressions of space and time, rules for relics, ways of dancing, apparitions, and role of women in the festivity.



1. Jesús Franco, the first Captain
dancing . 1984



2. The third captain Francisco Montiel
waiting for other devils. 1984

3. A little devil. 1984.

The space

Throughout the Corpus Christi celebrations there is the danger that by imitating the devil as masquerade, the real devil might be conjured in to existence to claim his imitators. The area within which the festivities take place is held to be safe (provided certain precautions are taken); whereas beyond that area one would enter a dangerous, unprotected space. The core of the town formed by the Church, the churchyard or cocoa yard, *La Casa del Alto*, the Cross of Forgiveness, the Cross of Calvary, the Holy House belong to the safe (sacred) space, as do the houses visited by the devils. (Map 8)

Various important rituals of the Corpus Christi festivity are held in this space. On Wednesday the Eve of Corpus Christi: there are the first blessing of the devils at the Cross of Forgiveness, the homage held in the entrance of the church, the repentance in the churchyard and the ceremony in the Holy House. On Thursday, prayers in the churchyard, the payment of alms, the mass and the procession likewise also take part within this safe area. These places are related to the blessing acquired by the devils in their repentance and their homage to the Sacrament. Along *The Calle Real* and the *Calle San Juan* (Royal and Saint John Streets) the altars mark the boundaries of a safe space. The houses of María Tecla, Augusta and Camilo, where the devils dressed and received the first blessing and protection are safe. The *Calle del Medio* (Middle street) in where, on Wednesday, the Eve of Corpus Christi, the fall of the devils takes place. The *Calle Real* (Royal Street) is also important because here the fall of the overseer takes place. Moreover at the end of the *Calle Real* is a big stone, and some meters past it is the place, at which is held the *Velorio* . The plantation, about 30 meters from the edge of the town, is the *catmito* tree, which marks the boundaries of safety for the Corpus Christi devils.

However, even the churchyard, the Holy House, member's houses, and streets adjacent to the church are areas where the devils must be careful. If they carry their relics and all the badges that protect them from the real devil, such as the white scarf and a distinguish mark on the forehead of the mask (Doctrine, p.145) (Plate 43, 3, p.237) they are not in danger. Moreover, in these areas the devils are watched over by the captains, who are always counting

them and are ever alert to anything that might happen. Others of the community, such as Augusta, are also watchful and alert. But the devils' safety prevails only up to the limit of the *caimito* tree (*Achras sapota*), where the devils rest for some periods during the festivities and where the final day's feasting is held, as mentioned above.

It is important to point out that demarcation of safe space is linked with the ceremonies, as they take place in different parts of the town together with the protective devices the devils have. The wearing of the mask, in a way, defines this uncertainty. For example, the closer they come to the church, the Holy House and the Sacrament the safer they become, and the performers uncover their faces. In the street the devils have their faces covered, suggesting the greater ease with which they could be trapped by Satan. However, during the procession, they walk and dance along the streets with the face uncovered, because this ceremony provides safety. (further explanation in mask tradition, p.247) This is an example of the ambiguity, which surrounds the imitation of the devil and the definition of safe space. The streets may or may not be totally safe, according to the situation.

Beyond this area, space is dangerous, for example from the *caimito* tree going through the plantation to the sea. The devils cannot pass beyond the *caimito* tree, with either masks or their instruments, because they will be in danger. Beyond this limit they are no longer protected in any way and can be carried off by the true devil. The *caimito* tree is the ultimate boundary between safe and dangerous spaces.

During the time of slavery, going to the sea was prohibited. Part of the explanation of these boundaries can be related historically to the need to control the slave group working on the plantation, the beginning of which is marked by the *caimito* tree. The administrator of the plantation feared the beach because of the illegal traffic the slaves could have had with the Dutch, who came there to obtain cocoa from the slaves. However, proceeding in the other direction, one has not yet heard any stories, relating to Corpus Christi which explain the danger of the other direction, the route to El Paraíso, which is outside the town, in the mountain, which is also a thick forest. The devils cannot go beyond the *caimito* tree, as Augusta explained: "Ah, because they cannot advance from there, because

their ornament does not permit it, what they are wearing does not permit them to go too deeply into the mountainous zone, because, they are playing the part of the devil, and if there is one of those devils who is not well prepared, it is really easy for the real devil to take him away."(1985)

In relation to problems of space the Society of Corpus Christi faced difficulties when people from the Central University of Venezuela, who were working in Chuao proposed the participation of Chuao in the meetings of the devils of Venezuela. This raised two problems: the performance of the devils outside the time of the festivity; and leaving their safe space to go beyond it to represent the devils of Chuao elsewhere in Venezuela. The first meeting of the devils of Venezuela was held in Chuao, but the following reunions were held in other regions. After considerable discussion with the expression of various and opposing opinions, the arguments of Néstor Liendo, the overseer, prevailed and they decided to participate in the devils' meeting. They settled the matter and solved the problems in the following manner : when the devils of Chuao have to go to represent the town, they are not actually Corpus Christi devils, merely performers in a spectacle, to show other people the beauty and the dancing of the Corpus Christi festivity in Chuao. Thus, they decided that these taboos do not apply to these particular performances. However, they cannot put their masks on when travelling through the plantation, they have to keep them covered or in a bag.

Time of the performance

Summarizing the information already given on this subject: On the Eve of Corpus Christi, the fall of the devils must be finished at 12 noon; The day of Corpus Christi, the performers have to go out very early, 5 a.m. to protect the town against the real devil. The Mass on Corpus Christi day has to be held at 12 noon, (nowadays, it is more flexible, and can be some minutes later). It is believed that the transgression of time could be very dangerous for the success of the festivity, because it could permit the real devil to take advantage and defeat the Corpus Christi devils, which means the defeat of Christ by Satan. That is one of the reasons the roles of the captains are

extremely important, especially Jesus Franco' s role. They are guardians of the Corpus Christi festival. As an example, Augusta told this story: " You know the colour red has to do with fire, which is the colour of hell. Once in Chuao something happened, the real devil fell down with the Corpus Christi devils, because they fell down later, after twelve. Martín Gutiérrez, who was the first captain, at that time, and a very well prepared man, saw the real devil, with a red kerchief and totally red, between the other devils, thus he came to him and prayed the secret prayer and threw the real devil out." (Augusta, 1989)

The relics

The wearing of the relics works in a double way. The relics give protection to the devils, but at the same time if they transgress the prohibitions they can disappear leaving the devils unprotected.

"Ah, well, the relics have to be used during the time they are dancing Corpus Christi, because they are really dressed up as devils. The Devil pursues them, and if they do not carry a relic, they can even have a fright, because there are persons who have had a fright when they have not had the relics on their person. They can use them for up to a month, because at one time they used to carry them like for 40 days, now they only use them during the days they are dancing Corpus Christi. If they want to dance to the jukebox or to other music, they have to be free of the relics to be able to dance, they can't even dance, it's bad." (Augusta, 1985)

Relics and sex.

"In the past they have forty days of penance, and to have sex wasn't allowed. It was the law, all the time they had to wear their relic. It was for the single man, if you were married by the church, becoming one flesh, so you can have sex, but not wearing the relics. The law established was forty days of abstinence from the day of Corpus Christi. (María Tecla,1985)

"They cannot have sex while they carry the relics. "No, not with the relic, no, even if they are married. They cannot sleep with their wives while having the relics on their person, that is bad. The relics are sacred, because they are baptised and what they contain is sacred." (Augusta, 1985)

Breaking the norm of 40 days of sexual abstinence, while wearing the relics, has given rise to a series of stories which have remained in the town's oral tradition, and serve to point out the strength of the belief at present.

"I never had any misfortune as *Sayona*, but when I was a low ranking devil, I was making love with a girl, and put my relics in the pocket of my trousers and when I got dressed I could not find the relics, and I went with a light to the place in which I was, and I did not find them . Finally they appeared three weeks later in the Holy House on the altar. Because of that I believed very much in the devils." (Fortunato (*Liberato*) González, 1985).

Augusta and María Tecla told other stories of the breaking of the law, which emphasise the importance of the relics in the protection of the devils.(50,51)

The prayers

Augusta explained: " Satan tempts the devils, if they are not well prepared, or at least know some prayer to defend themselves in a dangerous situation when they have contact with the real devil, because you know they are dressed as devils, and that attracts the real devil, who tries to cause damage to them. If one devil has a weak spirit, the real devil tempts him and dominates him, which is very dangerous. The problem is that many devils do not know what the content of the Corpus Christi is. Many of them dance without knowing exactly why they are doing it. That is a thing so big, so dangerous that if you look carefully and think of the danger you are exposed you do not dress as a devil. You have to have a strong and deep devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament. " (Augusta,1987)

In the words of Néstor Liendo the role of the sacred prayer is indicated: "Manuel Ladera, my uncle, taught me *La Magnífica*, he trained me how to throw out the real devil, but I cannot give you more explanations because they are secret things. I remember by heart all the prayers my uncle taught me. For example I pray *La Magnífica* forward to protect my dance, and backward if I have to throw the real devil out of the festivity". (1989).

The power of the sacred prayers is reinforced through the stories belonged to the oral tradition in Chuao, such as:

The prayers and the call of Satan

"It happened to my grandfather, because if (the devil) doesn't know how to pray, if he isn't well prepared, the real devil carries him off. Once he (my grandfather) got the urge to urinate, and he went out behind the house dressed as a devil. Then when he was urinating, he heard this sound of rattles that would not leave him in peace, and such a roar, and those sticks as if they were going to jump on him, such a gust of wind. It was only he who felt it, and then at that moment he began saying the prayers he knew, and he cleared it up."(Augusta, 1985)

"Once I was sitting at the entrance to my house talking to my godmother Eulalia when I saw a little devil come dancing and going down alone, but when I saw him reach Marcelino's house, which is very near the boundary of the town, he was dancing in a unusual way, as if he was following the beat of the *caja*, but the *caja* was not there. Then I said to Eulalia It seems to me that something is happening to this devil because he is dancing going down alone as if he was following the *caja* down-street and I hear the *caja* up-street, then I called the devil: My son, where are you going, the *caja* is not here, it is in the opposite direction, but he answered me, no the *caja* is here near me, and continued dancing in the wrong direction. I tried to convince him he was wrong, but he did not want to hear me, then I thought this devil is not well, and I ran to him, reached him and said: "the *caja* is not here, if you are a Son of the Most Blessed Sacrament you have to go up street." When I said that, the devil said: 'Ay, señora Augusta forgive me, and I said to him: What is happening, who are you, then he took the mask off, very quickly and put it on again, I could see him, he was Segundo, a young man from Sinamaica. Then I said to him 'what happened my son' and he answered 'Ah I was going down because I heard the *caja* and the devils going in this direction', and I said to him 'No, no devil came here, no one, you have to go up-street', and then I took him to the place where the devils were dancing. Probably he was not well protected, and he didn't know any prayer to protect himself,"Some devils have their own prayers, they can fight against the temptation of the Devil." (Augusta, 1987)

Another story:

"I knew a man Felipe Mijares, who had a big fright because once in Corpus Christi all the devils were at the Cross of the Calvary and he was the only one going down from the big stone to the plantation, because he heard the *caja* in this direction, he was dancing following the *caja*, but on the way a child saved him, the child was like an angel, because when he saw the devil going down, he said : Look devil, where are you going? the *caja* is up, not here, the devil Felipe shook his head, but finally he took advice and then he turned and went up to the Calvary. You know this religion is very strong, you see to dress as a devil is to render honour to the Blessed Sacrament and obtain protection but at the same time the real devil can deceive a person. He tempts the Corpus Christi devils because they resemble him, with the same horns, tail and so on." (Augusta,1989)

Maritza Tagliaferro said: "Many years ago *Liberato*, my brother had passed the stream going to the churchyard, when he heard a strange pig sound, he turned back looking for the pig, and he could not see anything, then he continued walking, and again heard the same sound, then he thought it is better to pray, he did and immediately he didn't hear it any more, instead a strong smell of sulphur saturated the air." (1985).

The prayers and the apparition of Satan

"There was one occasion, after the devils had fallen, when only one devil fell, then Martin Gutiérrez, the first Captain, was approached dancing, when that gentleman (meaning the real devil) showed himself in front of Martin, but he said *La Magnífica* to the apparition and he disappeared. First you have to know *La Magnífica* to defend yourself, because if you don't know *La Magnífica* you don't know what can happen. This religion is very dangerous. Other things happened to me the day before yesterday, where I was working, a spirit appeared, he was dressed as a devil, and suddenly before I knew what was happening to me I was following him deep into the plantation, then I took control of myself, I prayed, and went back. My sister found me at the cross of Calvary and asked : Amado where were you? I was lost, I was lost, but so far as I know, I returned. if I didn't know the prayers, 'he' (the real devil) would

make me go into that plantation, that way, and would make me go mad. Perhaps I cannot say it was the devil but.., I was in the little square, I got up and went down that way. God brought me here. It must have been God who saved me. (Amado, 1984)

The apparition of the Blessed Sacrament

"Once Agustín Nuñez (one of the old devils) came from his conuco three days before Corpus Christi, and because he had sworn, when he resigned as second captain, that he would not dance Corpus Christi any more, he had no idea of coming to Chuao to dance. Well, he went to his hammock to have a rest, and he saw a child who passed from one side to the other. Then he said to himself I am seeing visions. It seems to me that a child is passing in front of me, then he got down from the hammock looking for the child but he could not find anybody. Then he came back to the hammock, and again the child passed by. Then Agustín said: 'Eh, stop who are you?', and then he heard a deep voice which said to him: Agustín, Corpus Christi is coming, think carefully, what can happen to you if you do not dance in my honour. Then he started to think when Corpus Christi would be this year, and he realized that it was only two days away. He hurried with his work, and the following day he went to Chuao and arrived at four o'clock in the morning, the Eve of Corpus Christi and asked María Tecla and Augusta to help him with the costume. We washed it and prepared everything for him. He danced full of devotion and from this time until he died he came every year to dance Corpus Christi, never again as the captain, but as a low ranking devil. He was the one who was right in the quarrel with José Rivas, but the only bad thing he did at that time was to throw his mask to the ground." (Augusta and María Tecla, 1989)

The importance of the captains' dance

According to Augusta's information the first captain, the other captains and the overseer have to be very careful with the performance of their dances. They have to perform them perfectly, without making any mistakes. That is of primary importance. A mistake by the Captains could be very dangerous for the safety of the whole festivity. The low ranking devils have more freedom, they can make some mistakes in the movement of their feet when they dance

without causing problems to the festivity. Actually they are not in charge of the feast.(1989)

The role of women

Within the Corpus Christi festivity, women are not allowed to participate in the dance; neither are they permitted to wear the devil's ornaments. The role of the women is confined to the conservation of the cult, as well as the making of the costumes and masks. Some women perform the cross of the devils and prepare the meals. Otherwise they watch the performance of the devils dance. (See Doctrine, p.146)

Augusta said: " My love, women cannot dance as devils because for us the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest, then a woman cannot beat her shirt in front of the Sacrament. That cannot be because the dance to the Sacrament is a sacred one, it is a very sacred dance, and it is forbidden that a woman should do it. You see women want to be attractive and look nice with dresses, and you know women are always women, and I do not agree with a woman dancing devils. Don't you see that in this dance you have to raise your legs very high, and jump. How do you feel seeing women doing that type of dance in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I do not agree and in Chuao it was never permitted. You can share with the devils your devotion to the Sacrament, but dress and dance as the devils, never. Once, here in Chuao a woman did that, the captain whipped her, and she was seriously injured, because that is too much, it is a lack of respect a woman dancing in front of the Sacrament, jumping, and showing her legs. We know that in other parts of Venezuela women dance as devils, but we, here in Chuao, do not accept that. The dancing of women as devils is not for us, because we think that is an irreverence to God." (1989)

The mask tradition

The origin of the mask is also derived from the Doctrine. As a ritual element, the mask, with its horns is an attempt to reproduce a likeness of the real devil. (Plate 26,p.190)Protection is provided by the white colour of the badge that distinguishes the Corpus Christi devils. All the masks are similar, the colours used are black, red and white. They have been made in obedience to Jesus Christ's command. (Doctrine, p.143

The first person who María Tecla remembers making the masks was Juan Laya, but she did not remember what the masks looked like at that time. Also her mother used to make them, in the form of Camilo masks. (Plate 44,1, 3, p.248)Actually the tradition of mask making was known from the time of Camilo Borges, who within the memories of its present inhabitants is the most famous mask maker of Chuao. It is possible that he is responsible for the present mask form worn by the devils of Chuao. Camilo Borges taught his son Ernesto Hernández.The masks were also made by the women; María Tecla's mother, as well as Marcelina Liendo (Camilo Borges' daughter), used to be mask-makers. (María Tecla and Marcelina are relatives, because both belong to the same branch of the Liendo family.) Since the time when Jesús Franco was elected first captain, in 1979, the performers have made their own masks.

The basic guide-lines for all masks are set out in the Doctrine. (p.145)Nevertheless some are considered more perfect than others. For example the horns of the mask should be perfectly symmetrical. Thus, Augusta and María Tecla affirm that the best are like those belonging to José Rivas,(Plate 44,1, p.248)Chácara and Jesús Franco. (Plate 36,1,p.225)Chácara wears the mask of his father who had used it for forty-six years before he bequeathed it to his son. All these masks belong to the type, which Camilo Borges imposed, around ninety or hundred years ago. Augusta expressed her opinion about the origin of the mask's form, which is different to the María Tecla's statement: "I do not think the form of dresses, masks and so on is imposed by Jesus Christ. They are the result of the creativity and the taste of the people involved. In all these cases I think that one starts and the others like it, that is the way of creating a traditional manner of doing things, and for me probably Camilo was the first one we know.



1. José Rivas' mask. An ancient type. 1980

2. A low-ranking devil mask. 1984



3. The overseer's mask. 1984





The Sayona Mask



The fall of the little devils

Perhaps he received the knowledge from somebody who used to make them before him. But I cannot say anything about this, because I do not know. I remember, only the Camilo masks." (1989)

The changes in the masks of Chuao, some years ago, were probably the result of meetings with devils from other regions of Venezuela. The devils of Chuao were impressed by the different masks they saw, and they made changes in their own traditional masks to try to imitate the Yare and Naiguatá masks. (Plates 45, 46, 47, (2), p. **250, 251, 252**)

"One year, I remembered I could see, in the fall of the devils only ten traditional masks. The rest of the devils worn these ugly masks, made under the influence of the Yare type; one mask with a horn, other with some kind of head or with very big horns, all were very ugly masks. For them the traditional masks of Chuao were not more useful, they were not more beautiful. Then I called my godfather Jesús Franco and I said to him: "Why when we were representing the devils of Chuao to Yare I saw some devils with these ugly masks, which do not belong to Chuao. If I was the captain I would not dance because you went to Yare to show the devils of Chuao, not others. Next year the devils again appeared with these ugly masks, and at this time I said to my godfather: 'Look, you must forgive me, because you are the highest authority but I want to tell you something. If the devils continue wearing these ugly masks, and not the masks of Chuao, I will not go with you any more, because since I was a child I have seen the same type of masks in Chuao, which were unique and the different masks, I knew they were the snout of pig and the head of donkey.'" (Augusta 1989)(Plate 47,1, p**252**)

Augusta's warning was successful, because from 1988, the devils made the masks following the tradition of Chuao.

The method of mask construction is as follows: first the shape is made of clay, and allowed to dry in the sun. Then the mask is built up by means of paper maché using several layers of news paper.

As Juan José Herrera explained: "They are made of clay, and newspapers (paper maché). First you make the mould, then you put horns on it, these are made of wood. Then you let it dry. When it is dry, you take the dirt off it and you are left with the mould of the mask. Afterwards, you put on the last coat of newspaper, you paint it all black. Then you paint the mouth and eyes red; you paint the edge



1. Different types of Chuao Masks . 1984



2. Group of devils wearing different interpretation of the traditional Chuao mask.



. Different types of Masks influenced by other Corpus Devils from
surrounding villages
1980

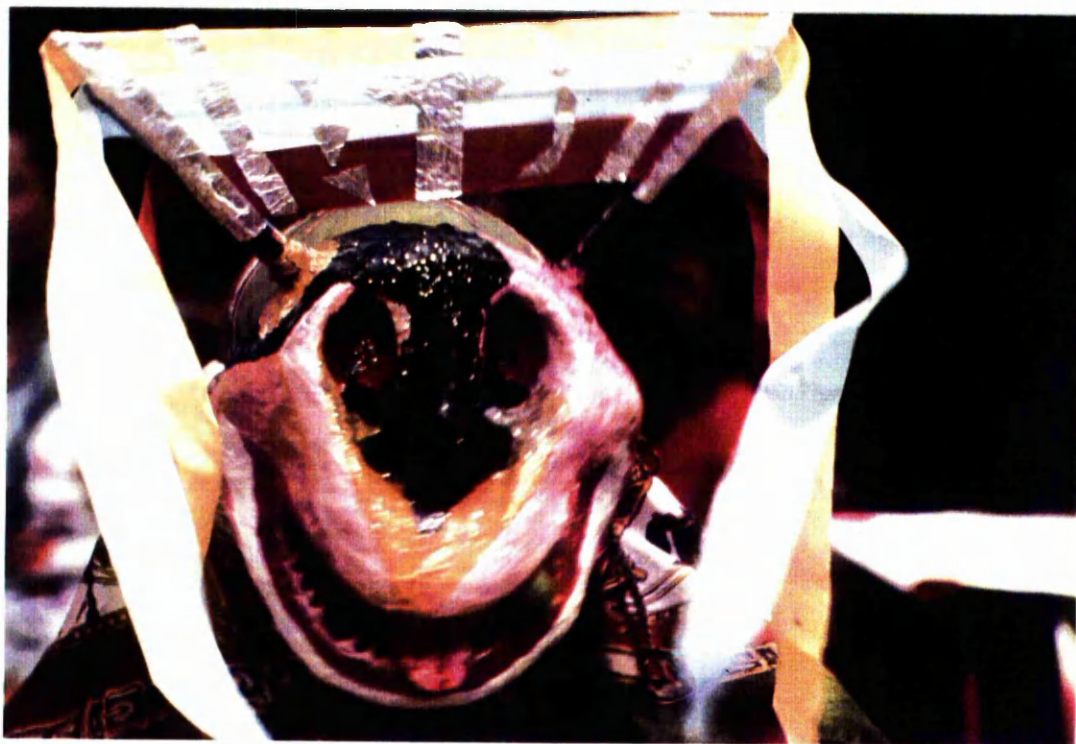


Plate 47

1. Donkey's mask. 1984



2. A devil's mask. 1985



of the mouth and eyes white. The horns are also painted red, white and black. You let it dry, then you attach the scarf, which can be any type, there is no colour restriction. The three-coloured ribbon, those of the flag in horizontal form, from horn to horn. The mask cannot be painted any other colours, only red, white and black. The form of the mask has to follow the traditional model, it cannot be changed (1988). (In this context 'traditional' means the mask form imposed by Camilo Borges)

Although all the masks follow the standard type: shape, colours, horns, ribbon between the two horns, scarves, they have variations in accordance with the different roles the devils perform:

The type of mask uses by the low ranking devils, provides the basic standard. An important aspect of the masks is the beard, through which a devil's status can be recognised. The masks of ordinary devils do not have beards. (Plate 44, 2, p.248) Only masks belonging to captains sport beards, and these are of different lengths, according to the hierarchy. The beard of the first captain's mask is longer than the beards of the second and the third captains. Between the second one and the third one there is a slight difference in the length of beards. The overseer's is the longest, because it represents the oldest devil, the "father". (Plate 23, p.175) "My uncle Juan Irene Liendo, who was overseer, used to lengthen his beard every year, I don't think the devils do it now. Every year he changed the beard, which was nice, made from white *cocuiza*, and enlarged it a little bit." (Augusta, 1989). (Plate, 26, p.190) I asked Néstor Liendo about it, he was surprised and he didn't ask me who gave me this information, he only said: "I didn't know it, I only know that the beard doesn't grow every year, it is always in the same length, the only thing that can make some slight difference is that you have to change it, more or less, every three years, because it becomes yellow, and it has to be white, so the length varies a little bit, when you change." (1989).

The second type of mask is the *Sayona* mask, which is painted in the same colours as the others, but it is smaller and the facial features are different, for it represents a woman, the mother of the devils. As Augusta explained: The *Sayona* mask is in the same shape as the others, but it has ears for wearing her earrings, also it has teeth, gold teeth, and a small bear." (1989) (Plate 44 A, p.248)



1. Edita González, one of the *Sayona*'s sister with a devil. 1984



2. Isabel Bolívar, Brigida and María Tecla accompanying Jesus Franco, who is resting. 1984

Only two other types of masks belong to the tradition of Chuao. As Augusta said: "Pig's snout and the donkey's head. They belong to Mario Martínez (Pig's snout) and Saturnino Chávez (Donkey), who invented them, maintaining the basic colours of the Chuao's mask. These masks are intended to look like the animals. The pig snout is danced by Mario Martínez and the donkey by Saturnino. "Only these two made this tradition of the donkey and pig. Now when Saturnino, who lives in Maracay, come to Chuao, he orders his mask to be made and he performs the dance as a donkey,(Plate 47, p.252) making the same sounds as the animal, and putting herbs in his mouth. In Mario Martínez does the same but makes the sounds of the pig. Nemesio López, one of the low ranking devil, also performed the dance of the the pig's snout. However, for a long time now, they have not been dancing these dances, I do not know why." (Augusta, 1989).

In relation to this subject Néstor said: "I am telling you something, I do not know the origin of the mask's form nor when the shape was ordered that they must have. I do not know what kind of promise the elders made, which forbid the changing of the mask's form to armadillo, goat or another animal shape. There is only one form of the mask and it cannot be changed. That was one of the first problems we, the captains, had to face as a result of the meeting of the devil dancers of Chuao with other devils of Venezuela, specifically the devils of Yare. (Plate 21, p.170)

"The mask I wear now as overseer belonged to my father, when I started dancing as a low ranking devil my father gave me a mask, which was made by Camilo Borges, the father of Anita and Marcelina. He bought it for fifteen bolivares. I danced with this mask all the time I was a low ranking devil and I only changed the ribbon and painted it every year before Corpus Christi. When I was elected as overseer the Society gave me the mask of overseer, and by coincidence it was my father's mask. You know, when my father could not dance any more, his overseer's mask went to Agustín Nuñez, and he danced with it for six years. Later Pancho Castillo, the next overseer used my father's mask for eleven years, and now as overseer I got the mask which belonged to my father, since then I have been dancing with it. Now I have been dancing for ten years. If we calculate the age of the mask from my father's time until now, it is twenty eight years old. But this mask is also older, because it was

earlier a plain devil's mask, which my father used when dancing as a low ranking devil, it was made by Camilo.(Plate 23, p.175) When my father was elected overseer he modified the jaw of the mask . He added a long beard converting it to an overseer's mask. So, it would be more or less fifty years old. The face did not suffer any change. The beards are made of cocuiza . I have changed the beards three times in all these years. I love this mask, you know, it went from hand to hand and at the end came to the same blood, to Néstor Enrique's hand, the son of Simón Ladera. I think I will do like the boxers, when I can not dance any more as overseer I will give the mask and also my costume to be exhibited in the Holy house as a reminder to the people of Chuao, not to be touched or used by anyone. You see I am dancing because of a promise made by my father when I was little and I was very ill; and for many years I have thought I would promise the Blessed Sacrament to put my mask and the whole costume in its house, when I cannot dance any more, as a homage to the religion I profess, which is very deep and fundamental for me. Also this year I think I will order the making of another overseer's mask to go to the meeting of the Venezuelan devil dancers, because I do not want to take out my father's mask, because you know that meetings are another thing, different from the Corpus Christi.They are very good but they are not the same." (1989)(52)

As this information indicates masks of the low ranking devils can be made every year, and they belong personally to each devil, but the captain's mask is given by the society to the performers who are going to dance as leaders of the Corpus Christi festivity. Another example was given by Augusta, when Pelón, her son, was called to dance as the Sayona because *Liberato* could not dance. He (the present Sayona) gave Pelón the mask for that particular performance. As for Néstor (the overseer) he can give his mask to the Society, if he wishes but he cannot give it, for example, to one of his sons, as a gift. (Plate 48, p.254)

The masks of the captains represent the authority of the Corpus Christi Society, so they can be worn only by the elected leaders of the Society. If for any reason one of them cannot participate in a festivity, he chooses the person to perform his role, and in this case the captain will lend his mask to him.

The justification for mask use is given in the Doctrine of María Tecla. (p.445) There is no interest to individualistic development of the mask form. The masquerade aesthetic can perhaps best be defined as a dramatic realization of the doctrine of María Tecla. Tradition is conserved just as it has been received, for here, the significance of the masks is of primary importance when the identity of the devils is hidden by the mask, they make noise as animals, but they cannot talk except when they read the edicts.

It is interesting to note that the way in which the masks are used changes, according to the dance being performed and its location. When the devils fall down, they wear the mask from the time they enter the town, as they pass the Cross of Forgiveness, until they reach the churchyard, where they do penance. There, they uncover their faces and the masks are placed on their heads, facing upwards. Since they are in the sacred space in front of the church, Jesus Christ's protection covers the devils. Afterwards, when they go to the Holy House, they leave the masks against the wall, because it is also a sacred area.

That makes quite clear that there are four options: face covered by mask; mask worn horizontally on head and face uncovered; mask not worn at all, and mask worn in the back of the head, with the "horns forward" position. The *mojiganga* performed in the churchyard is danced with the face uncovered, as the dances performed in member's homes. During the *up-street, down-street* dance, the masks cover the devil's faces. When they perform the *dancita* and the last dance, faces are uncovered and the masks with the horns forwards and, when they dance in the churchyard, the face is uncovered and the mask worn skyward on their heads.

Otherwise, if they want a tip, from anyone, they ask for it through their dance, with their faces covered by the masks, by dancing in front of people and using a scarf to try to clean their shoes. (Plate 32, 2, 201)

It has already suggested that the use of the mask is closely related to the idea of sacred spaces wherein one is safe from the real devil. The ambivalence inherent in imitating the devil, for this could indeed conjure into existence the devil himself. Yet, on the street the mask has protective value, where in areas of greatest sanctity this significance is irrelevant.

Néstor Liendo said: "When we are outside in the streets we have to wear the mask, but when we are inside the houses we take it off. For example, each devil who enters a house, takes off his mask, beating the rattle and drinks some rum or *guarapita* and after that when all the devils are inside without masks we dance the *mojiganga*. But if, as overseer, I find a devil on the street without his mask I punish him. If he, for example, is very suffocating, he can enter a house and take off the mask, but in the street the devils must wear their masks. I do not permit any devil without a mask on the street, because it could be dangerous, it could be a problem. If you as devil want to stay without a mask, it is better for you to go home and take off your whole costume, and then you can go out without having problems, but if you are dressed as a devil going on the street, you have to wear your mask. Only in front of the Blessed Sacrament do you take off your mask, to render homage to it. If you are a believer, you have to comply with the rules. Another thing, if you as devil meet your girlfriend you cannot stop to talk to her and take off your mask. That is totally forbidden. If I find a devil doing that I will punish him whipping him very hard. I told the devils, if you are tired and drunk, go to your house, rest for a while and then go out when you feel good." (1989)

A further commentary on the masking tradition

The material artifacts of the Corpus Christi celebration

What follows is a comment on different components of the devils' costumes, manufacture and significance, rattles, whips and relics. It is based on several interviews and my own observations.

The suit

The captains have more than one suit, (the differences between them are only in the printed fabric). Jesus Franco is the only one who still uses hand painted trousers, which he painted himself. (Plate 43, p.237) The low-ranking devils make new ones for each Corpus Christi festivity, when they can afford it.

The Sayona dresses as a woman, she wears a coloured printed fabric skirt instead of trousers, and a separate shirt, as do the other devils, but with long stockings, with no balls on them, and *alpargatas* (Venezuelan sandals).

Several women in the community take it upon themselves to make the costumes; among these seamstresses are Evarista Liendo (mother of Chácara, the second captain at the present time), Mercedes (Sebastián Murillo's wife, a leader and participant in other celebrations in Chuao), Naima (Tarsicios's daughter, he is Pedrito Fajardo's son, (Note 43, p.232) Herminia (Isabel Bolívar's daughter and at one time the woman of Nestor Liendo, the devil's overseer), Margarita Liendo, Augusta Chávez and of course María Tecla. She has taught the others how to make the costumes, and is still the teacher. When somebody wants to make a costume and does not know how to, she or he comes to María Tecla to learn. Nevertheless, anyone could make the costumes as the only requirements are the knowledge of how to cut them out and owning a sewing machine. As an example, Néstor said: "When I went to dance as overseer for the first time my mother told me to go to María Tecla and ask her to measure me and show me how to cut the dress. María Tecla did not make it, but she taught me, and I then taught Herminia Bolívar [his woman at that time]. So all my dresses have been made by Herminia, all of them except two, which were a gift from Maribel, Juan de la Cruz' daughter, but the person who sewed them was señora Guillermina Liendo. And the last one, I had this year, was sent from Maracay. It was also a gift from Epifanio's wife (a friend of Néstor who lives in Maracay). In total I got seven dresses, but they were too many, so I gave three of them to Lesbia, (his sister) she made two bed sheets for her children and I still have four dresses. My dresses are similar to my father's dress." He added: "I received a gift from these women, not because I have a love affair with them but because they get on well with me and I am one of the best friends of their families". (1989).

The rattle

The use of the rattle is to imitate the real devil. (see Doctrine, p.145) Yet, at the same time, the rattle serves to make the Corpus Christi devils different from the real devil, because of the white scarves they carry in their right hand with the rattle.

Regarding the significance of the rattles Augusta added to the doctrine of María Tecla that "another reason for the rattles is to make fun, to accompany the cow bell, to match the beat of the *caja* and to manipulate it with the right arm to make a nicer dance, more joyful." (1989)

And in relation to the significance of the scarf colours: "the white means purity, on the other hand red is danger. In Chuao we learned that red means fire, which attracts the devils more, because it belongs to the Devil himself. The white scarf is the badge of the Holy Trinity, the purity of the Sacrament, and the fire is associated with hell and of course with the real devil. Other scarves, the devils carry with the rattle, can be of any colour but not red. We also do not use black because it is used only as a sign of mourning. For example the devils next year have to fall on Wednesday, the eve of Corpus Christi, with a black badge in their costume because of the death of one of the brothers, Eustoquio Liendo, who danced as devil for more than thirty years, he died this last September. I will be aware of that, because it is a way to express respect for our dead brother." "The white scarf is very important because it makes the difference between the Corpus Christi devils and the real devil" (1989).

The whip

Juan José Herrera describes the whip as follows: "It is made with a stick, any kind, except bamboo, which is too weak. It is cut down to the size one wants, you open a hole in one of the ends, or else you make a notch. This is for tying on the rope. It is made of cow hide. The hide is prepared, by soaking and afterwards, a strip is cut from the centre, with a razor blade and a hole is made in one end, Then you take a nail, and nail it anywhere, on wall, or a tree, there you tie the hide and turn it to twist the rope. You wait three or four days until the hide is cured, then you tie it to the stick. This

task is done by each devil, a month before Corpus Christi. You only change the leather when it breaks. The first time you fall down it has to be new, it can't belong to another devil. (1988)

The whip is known in Chuao as *mandador*. In colonial times, the person in charge of the slaves was called *mandador* and he used to have a whip, with which he punished the slaves as necessary.

Nestor said: "I have my father's whip, which is eleven years old, when I take it out for the festivity I have to be very careful because I do not want to lose it or to have to change the leather very often. (Plate 30, p.195) I have two more whips and I prefer to use them rather than my father's. I have changed the leather three times in all these years. I myself made the whip, to suit my size, from a special wood, *cuspa* or *quizanda* which is strong but at the same time light. My father's whip I have taken out only twice since I have been the overseer, I prefer to keep it at home with the mask on the wall." (1989)

Summary and conclusion

The origin of the Corpus Christi festivity in Chuao is given in the Doctrine of María Tecla. (p.139) This Doctrine is derived from the teaching given to and handed on by the earliest slaves of the plantation, and preserved by women as oral tradition.

This tradition relates among other things that Corpus Christi is the time that the Devil (Satan) can take away his Christian imitators. This would explain the precautions that the Captains must take, the relics, the prohibitions and all the protective devices and emblems of the devils at that time. Each of the stages of Corpus Christi are interpreted in Chuao as having a divine origin. For example, Mary protects her son from the Devil and obtains peace, (see Doctrine, p.142) and thereby defines the role of women. In the Doctrine of María Tecla the women arrive with their little Christian devils before the ecclesiastical hierarchy does. (see Doctrine, p.146) This image of woman as protector and mother corresponds with the role of women within the real world of Chuao, in which women have greater dominance than might appear at first sight. Women are responsible for the education and religious orientation of the children. In the course of many conversations with María Tecla, she often remarks that women were to blame for the children's lack of devotion,

because they had not inculcated the doctrine in them, nor had they taught them the minimum basic rules. Thus we understand her vision of women as mothers, protectors, guides. The main sources of information in the Chuao community have been women even though the festival itself is a predominantly male performance. The male participants, including the captains, know their duties and obligations but when asked the reasons why something is done in a certain way, they answered that these belong to ancient traditions which were handed down to them in this form; but they also indicated to me that the right person to give an explanation should be María Tecla. Moreover, on another occasion, when I was meeting with a group which included Augusta Chávez, she was the one who held the floor and proffered the explanations. At one point, one of the men ordered another, who was drunk, to be quiet because he was preventing Augusta explain about Corpus Christi. Thus the knowledge and the narrative lore of the mythology of Corpus Christi rest with the women of Chuao.

The foundation of the Society of Corpus Christi and the wearing of the costumes is regarded as based on a mandate from Jesus Christ. For example, he gives them the different ways of protecting themselves, in the use of costumes and with the badges which differentiate them from the real devil.

The historical derivation of the celebration is from Spanish colonialism. However the present tradition in Chuao is apparently established only in time of Martín Gutiérrez, the first captain of Corpus Christi, around a hundred years ago. Either the rules dated only from that time or they were revitalized. The mask's form, the taboos and prohibitions, the ways of dancing, the places in which you have to pay, for example the *cajero*, which has to be in the house of Camilo Borges, mask maker and *cajero* in time of Martín Gutiérrez. The basic aspects, the structure of the festival such as the adoration of the Sacrament, the procession, the altars, the Mass, the music and the dances together with the general exclusion of women from active participation in the liturgy, all derives from the Spanish heritage. The Doctrine itself is a product of that Colonialism. The Spaniards wanted to implant Catholicism as the ideology of colonial domination. Chuao was directly under Church control until the middle of the

nineteenth century, when the president Guzman Blanco took all the Church properties.

The leaders of the festivity of Corpus Christi are highly respected in the community. They also belong to important families of Chuao, which do have, and had, a leading position in the community. According to oral tradition, there was a time when the devils were very few, because of bad leadership. However with a change in leadership a revitalization of the festivity took place. It happened ten years ago, when Jesus Franco was elected first captain and young people were promoted to occupy important positions within the Society. All this reaffirmed the importance of the festivity and ensured its preservation for the people of Chuao.

The Corpus Christi festivity in Chuao reveals a strong stability in this society, social control can be achieved by this festivity and at the same time, during Corpus Christi, the town is transformed into a temple, into a sacred place dedicated as a whole to the Sacrament. This event renews and reveals the strong faith of the people of Chuao

In support of this argument it is interesting to look carefully at different levels of interpretation of the festivity of Corpus Christi.

The first level relates to the categorisation of space in the town. We can define safe (sacred) and dangerous (profane) space, which are the domains respectively of Christ and Devil. The safe space belongs to Christ, the enlightenment, the known, the civilized space in which people live. The other category¹⁴/dangerous, belongs to the Devil: it is the mountain, the jungle, the dangerous animals, the darkness, the unknown. The devils of Chuao play a very important role, as mediating between these two spaces, to save the town and the people, and to glorify Jesus Christ, and in the submission of the devils to the Sacrament, to domesticate that dangerous unknown.

At a second level it is obvious that the festivity belongs to the domain of men. The belief in the Most Blessed Sacrament, as everybody in Chuao says, is dangerous. It is a strong religion, and devotees need individual protection.

The crossing of the relics, the secret prayers, for example. All these are led, nowadays, by women. Perhaps this is a role once taken by men. The teaching of the Doctrine and the method of preparing men to dance in Corpus Christi is regarded as being established by the last slave Juan Bautista

Liendo. Oral sources are clear that is only after Liendo, that women took up the teaching of the Doctrine. The covert role of women, also belongs therefore to this second level.

Thus there are two opposite but complementary forces at work in Chuao, one masculine the other feminine. This moreover appears to be a reflection of the forces at work in all aspects of life in Chuao. María Tecla and Augusta preserve the history and the origins. They enrich the festivity in this way and are acting as the memory and conscience of the culture. This is paralleled by their role, as mothers and protectors. In this context they are acting as guardians of the culture. They are the guardians of the tradition thereby providing the context for present and future performances. The male leaders of the festivity, Jesús Franco, Nestor Liendo, Chácara, *Liberato* González and Francisco Montiel within that context focus attention on action and performance in the present, and look for ways of involving young people, for performances in the future. As performers and as leaders in performance, at the same time they respect and admire the women, such as María Tecla and Augusta, for their knowledge of Corpus Christi celebration. With their warnings, prayers and preparation of children, these common act as a reminder to the generations of the living of the spiritual origin of the festivity and of the need to preserve ones own cultural heritage.

At another level, again the popular success of the Corpus Christi performance is assured by the captains, insofar as they achieve what is perceived as perfection in the masks and their performance. It is important to distinguish the roles the captains have, in comparison to the other devils, which wear the same type, thus all hiding their identity. The expectation of perfection in the dances performed is a challenge to the captains, and if they succeed they win the respect of the community. In this way they come to have authority.

The ambiguity latent in the mask *is* complex : the masked performer is a portrayal of the devil in some sense, he presents a likeness of the devil.

Indeed, the likeness is such that the real devil might be conjured up; but, it is only a likeness : the performers may be like the devils, yet they are not the devil. Moreover, the mask, while imitating the real devil actually provides protection from the devil.

Then, as the performers *move* closer to the Holy House the mask as a protection becomes irrelevant : the mask is pushed to the top of the head at the church, in the act of penitence that dramatizes the ultimate submission even of Satan himself to Christ. Finally, at the ritual high point of the celebration, at the procession through the town of the Sacrament, which is the literal presence and embodiment of Jesus himself, the mask is inverted by placing it facing backward, at the back of the head. This is not a mere progression from raising the mask: the logical conclusion of that could be a mask *up*-side down at the back of the head.. But here its use is fully inverted: the mask has been taken off, but put back on back to front. The devil, one might argue, has been finally subdued: and if the mask were brought back over the face, it will of *course* be upside down. Is the inversion of the mask the subversion of the devil?

Yet it remains at the back, looking back perhaps at the devil that remains in all of us until we are finally purged of all sin.

The reliance upon magical technique also deserves comment: the relics, the secret prayers, which could lose their power if revealed.

This does seem like (in a very approximate way) aspects of West and Central African magical medicine filtered through the sacramental system.

The vitality of the Corpus Christi festival in Chuao lies in the ambivalence, in the ambiguity, in the interplay between nostalgia for the past and a search for a future. Beliefs in the strong and dangerous religion in which the devil is domesticated through submission to Jesus in the Sacrament, provide for instruments of socialization, education, and criticism, and the establishing of a moral consensus.

Notes

1. Julio Caro Baroja. **El estío festivo y fiestas populares de verano.**
2. Sebastián de Covarrubias. 1984 (ed. facsimilar 1611.) **Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Española**, Madrid.
3. **Diccionario de Autoridades.** 1979 (ed. facsimilar 1739.) Madrid.
4. Carlos Duarte. 1987. **Las fiestas de Corpus Christi en la Caracas Hispánica.** Caracas, p.8
5. Ibid, p.10.
6. Daría Hernández and Cecilia Fuentes. 1989. **Corpus Christi**, Revista Bigott, nº 15, Caracas, p. 8.
7. **Golden Age.** The 16th and 17th centuries in Spain are rightly called The Golden Age, Siglo de oro, in literature and other arts. Their extraordinary artistic achievement was due, among other causes, to the unification of the Kingdom under the control of the Kings Ferdinand and Isabelle, but especially to the conquest of America, which gave Spaniards economic power.
8. Lope de Vega, Lope de Rueda and Calderón de la Barca are well known writers of the Golden Age.
9. **"Ordenanzas de las dos ilustres y antiguas cofradías del Santísimo Sacramento y Animas benditas del Purgatorio, sitas en la Iglesia Parroquial de San Isidoro de esta ciudad de Sevilla. Aprobadas por el Real y Supremo Consejo de Castilla, Año 1788.** In this document, The confraternities or brotherhoods of The Blessed Sacrament and the All Souls asked The King of Spain Charles, for the aproval of the rules of the institutions, which were established in 1528, according to the Bule of Pope Julius II, issued in 1508. They were accepted and published in 1788. This information is mentioned here, first, because is a good example of the control established by the Spanish Crown over the religious institutions, especially in the 18th century. Second, the rules of the confraternities offer many similarities with the same kind of institutions brought to Latin America in colonial times, and by extension to

the particular case of the Corpus Christi society in Chuao. Then, it is possible to guess the medieval heritage of the Chuao Society.

10. Livingstone. **The concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.**
11. Carlos Duarte, **op. cit**, p. 23.
12. **Ibid**, p. 21
13. **Ibid**, p. 11
14. **Acta del Cabildo de Caracas**, Tomo IV.
15. Carlos Duarte, *op. cit*, p.14.
16. **Ibid**, p. 10.
17. **Ibid**, p.15.
18. This was probably mentioned, because many people in the community did not want to be in the position of being in charge of the festivity given its expense. Thus the members of the Cabildo and specially one of the Mayors, Don Luis Altamirano, decided to make a *Tarasca*, which could last many years and in this way the festivity could be held causing few economic problems to the people who were poor and therefore not afford these expenses. It may be presumed that a previously new *Tarasca* had been built every year, as it was in Madrid during this century. **Ibid**, p. 16
19. **Ibid**, p. 16
20. **Ibid**, p. 16
21. **Ibid**, p.16
22. In the documents of the Acts of the Cabildo, 1767,1768 1769. In 1770 only three musicians participated in the festivity, two *cajeros* (drum players) and one clarinet player and the document mentioned the supply of socks, shoes and shirts to the three musician. **Ibid**, p. 23

23. Carlos Duarte, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
24. José Antonio Calcaño. *La Ciudad y su música: Crónica musical de Caracas*. Caracas, " In St. Mauritius Church were celebrated Corpus Christi, until late 19th century."(p.19). Luis Correa Delgado. In **Antología de costumbristas venezolanos** said: " In the festivity held at the arrival of the Mayor of the Province, in 1673, the devils danced, as they did in Corpus Christi festival, they were Spanish devils and not Indians or Africans as some people thought."(p.49) . These two informations are a good example of the process of mixture of the festivities in colonial times. The Corpus Christi devil dancers were freed slaves and slaves in St. Mauritius confraternity, however in other brotherhoods devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, Spanish members danced as devils. In Caracas, in 1816 the confraternities of the Most Blessed Sacrament were five: Sta. Rosalía, St. Mauritius, Altagracia, Candelaria and San Pablo.
25. *Ibid.* p. 24.
26. Rafael Salazar. **Los diablos de Venezuela**, p.13
27. Carlos Duarte. *Op. cit.*, p 24.
28. Ramón Velásquez y otros. **Venezuela Contemporanea** p.679.
29. "The Guarico devils were created to perform spectacles featuring devils. "They are 'folklore' devils."(Augusta, 1989). As far as I know the devil of Cumaná is only one who goes out every year after Carnival time through the street of Cumaná, and the children make fun of him. He also has nothing to do with Corpus Christi celebration.
30. **SOVEDAD**. Organization promoted by some lecturers of the School of Anthropology and School of Education of the Central University of Venezuela. It was founded in 1983, under the leadership of Chuao Society. The main goals of the organization are to unite efforts of the different associations of Corpus Christi in order to preserve the tradition of the Corpus Christi festival, and established close relationship between the members.

31. From interviews with the Captains and other members of the different devils organisations in 1986, 1987 and 1989 in the meetings of the Devils. Participation in the Corpus Christi festivity in Naiguatá in 1986 and 1989 and completed by the information given by the anthropologists Cecilia Fuentes, Daría Hernández and the musician and composer Rafael Salazar.
32. In October 1989 I went to Chuao to assist in the meeting of the devil dancers of Venezuela, and there I met María Tecla and Augusta, as usual. We sat down at the entrance of Augusta's house, looking at the people who were entering the town to see the performers, when María Tecla, remembering the last Corpus Christi festival and the role she plays as repository of the Doctrine, said : "This year, first Communion was not held. In this sense, Corpus Christi was not nice. You see the person who takes Communion for the first time erases his sins, the sins of the world in the body of Jesus Christ, who is the food, the soul and the faith of a Christian. But mothers nowadays permit their sons to dance devils without having taken communion. Before it was not possible. Although the child was little. I remember Emiliano Molina, who once said to my mother, his aunt "Aunt I want to dance in Corpus Christi because I don't want the devil to take me away He was a child of five years of age, and he took communion, before dancing. My mother, also made a mask for him. (María Tecla, 1989)
33. Augusta told me : "Jose Rivas was very rough with people, and also on one occasion when Agustín Nuñez was second captain, He met Pancho Castillo, one of his devils, giving more orders to the others than he did, so then he asked him why he was behaving incorrectly?, Pancho Castillo answered 'do not ask me, ask the first captain. Agustín who was a very well educated man went to Jose Rivas (Ladera), and gently asked him: what is happening with Pancho Castillo who belongs to my legion?, and now I see him dressed in a costume which does not belong to him and giving orders over me. But Jose Rivas instead of giving Agustín the explanation answered in a bad mood : 'I am the chief and he can order whatever he wants because I give him permission' Agustín became very discontent with these answers that questioned his seniority, and throwing his mask angry, said he would never dance Corpus Christi again. He went to his house and afterwards left Chuao and went to live in Cepe.' Augusta added to that story " I had a word with Jose Rivas questioning his behaviour because I could not understand why he did not tell Agustín that Inés Bolívar, who was at that time the overseer had decided to

participate in the first part of the ritual and be replaced later due to a recent operation. Moreover I pointed out to him, who was my great father, why Papa José you did not consult with the other members of the society before taking such decision?. As a consequence the members of the Society had a meeting and elected Jesus Franco to substitute Jose Rivas."(1989)

34. According to the information obtained the names of the captains people remember are:

First Captains

Jesus Franco (the present captain), José Rivas (Ladera), Pedro Liendo Isidoro Amador and Martín Gutiérrez

Second captains

Javier Ladera (Chácara), Agustín Nuñez (Alemán), José Peñalver, Claudio Franco, Manuel Ladera Antonio Franco (on the time of Martín Gutiérrez)

Third captains

Pito Montiel (Jesus Franco's son.)

Overseers

Néstor Liendo, Pancho Castillo, Inés Bolívar, Simón Ladera, Juan Irene Liendo, Domingo Franco.

Sayonas Fortunato González, Lucio, Santos Morillo, Domingo Herrera, Pedrito Fajardo, Ignacio Hermoso. *Cajeros* ulio Bacalao and Jesús Bacalao (uncle and nephew, sharing the position at the present time), Lorenzo Bolívar, Ernesto Hernández, Julio Rojas (at the time of the first captain Pedro Liendo.) and Camilo Borges (at the time of Martín Gutiérrez.)

Captains of Alm

Pablo Borges (at the present in proving time), Venancio Bolívar, Simón Franco, (at the time of Martín Gutiérrez)

35. "The meeting on Tuesday was always only to count the devils and organize the three legions. However the last time they discussed other problems, at the meeting. Then I told them, especially Jesus Franco, that the meeting on Tuesday had only one reason, you cannot use it to resolve other matters. - Yes, of course, only to count the devils, if you have a problem you have to discuss it in a special meeting, you cannot pay the *caja* in the Holy House you have to do it in Camilo Borges' house, because that is the law. And they have to give the alms at 12 noon on Corpus Christi day in the churchyard not in the Holy House. But you know they do not calculate time and when the time of Corpus Christi comes they have not got time to make payments as they have to do.

But they cannot change it because if they do, they weak en the tradition. I told Jesús Franco that, he, as captain, could not accept this type of change. You see señora María Tecla I read the rules to the devils on Wednesday Eve, but I started to think they do not believe in these things." (Augusta, 1989)

36. Reading of Edicts. *Lectura de Bando*. According to Corominas in **Diccionario etimológico de la lengua española**, Bando (from fr. ban and this from the franc. ban) 13th. century. Decree or order issued by any authority, and solemnly proclaimed in public. This term disappeared but in 1548 reappeared in Spain, by the influence of Italy and it was used frequently during the second half of the 16th. century. **La lectura de bando**, in the context of Chuao and other popular religious manifestation in Venezuela, such la *Quema de Judas*, (The burn of Judas) appear to be the way ordinary people can either establish some kind of social control in their towns or make public discontent and socio-political criticism.
37. "I think that if you are a devil, you have to go to Augusta and say the prayers she prays, you have to be well prepared in the devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, to do the representation in the right way. For example I do not know why the devils are inside the church when the Mass is held, because when I used to dance as devil it was forbidden, you did your homage to the Most Blessed Sacrament, but outside the church." (Sixto Franco) ."The saying of Sixto is quite right . That was the custom, and also the devils could not bath during Corpus Christi, because they were exposed to the strong sun for many hours and if they bathe they will be very sick . The custom changed because in one year, I do not remember which one, on the day of Corpus Christi it rained hard when the Mass was held, then the devils had to go inside the church, because they had already been lying down in the churchyard for about two hours. They could not stand on the rain because they were very hot from the sun. From this moment the custom changed, and now, they go inside the church." (Augusta)
-Señora Augusta "Why at that time could the devils not go inside the church but could go inside the Holy House ?(Mocho Hernández)
-" Mocho because the Holy House is the house of the Society, and the house of the Corpus Christi devils, the brothers of Corpus Christi. Church is the house of God. "(Augusta)
-"I used to fall with the second legion, the captain was Manuel Ladera, I always danced with him because he was a very good captain." (Mocho)" (1987).

38. "I also remember when my grand mother Serapia was alive, she was like a priest to the devils. At sunrise, on the Eve of Corpus Christi, after the bath, the devils used to come to the old woman Serapia, to have her blessing. She asked them to kneel, and then she blessed them. The devils also gave her candles, thus our house was like an altar full of lighted candles. They said with much devotion: 'Give me your blessing Señora Serapia because I am going to fall in the first peal, and here is my candle'. When they took the blessing of this little old woman they felt much more protected, because she was older and wiser and the one who prayed best in the town. She was like a priest. I have some of her abilities, but not the same, she was a holy woman. ¿Which one of the present devils do as the former devils?. The Corpus Christi is not the same as before. I was afraid of the devils, when I was a child, but it was beautiful." (Augusta) - "Now, Señora Augusta is like our priest in Corpus Christi". (Julio Bacalao) (1987)
39. They call 'Male prayers' all those addressed to the Most Blessed Sacrament.
40. There is no explanation for that, the captains said : "it was always like this". Perhaps, because the Overseer has equal seniority with the first Captain, he has to fall on another street, thus establishing his hierarchy as father of the devils. "In former times this street was used by the Administrators and the principal families to enter the town, and people of Chuao could not come in through this way." (Maritza Tagliaferro, 1989)
41. The *cajero* is the name given to the man who plays the *caja*, which is a cylindrical double membrane drum. The body is made of the wood of the avocado tree, the two membranes made of deer leather, fastened firmly with maguey twine which is wound round the instrument in a V shaped pattern. A portion of this twine serves as a strap so that the player can hang the *caja* from his shoulders when he plays it. The "*caja*" is played with two sticks, one in each hand. Jesus Franco told me that: "The *caja* belongs to Chuao, it cannot be found in other Venezuelan towns. Until now, I am the only person who made it in Chuao." (Jesús Franco, 1989)
42. When talking with Jesus Franco, during a visit in December 89, he said: "I am from Chuao, all my family Franco and Bolívar were born and grew up here. Simón Franco my mother's father was very important at the time of the

President Gómez, he was in charge of the coffee plantation, El Paraíso . He was also in his life time in charge of the church, as I am now. " Speaking about Corpus Christi, he added: For ten years I have been the first captain. Before me was José Rivas, but the devils took the job away from him, and since then I am the first captain. At that time I had to revitalized the Corpus Christi festivity, and I think I have done a good work, if not the devils would get rid of me, as they did before" (1989).

43. "Pedrito Fajardo, was one of the most beautiful Sayonas, we have had. He used to dress in a very wide skirt, full of little bells, a very nice dress. You can imagine how nice was the dance of the Sayona accompanied by the sound of bells. María Fajardo, his mother made this beautiful dress . And Pedrito was a real dancer, with a type of charm that nobody could copy, he looked gorgeous with the long skirt because he was a very tall man. And it was a real pleasure to see how the devils, at that time, expressed their love for the mother . All the devils came, from the Holy House, when the Sayona was going to the Cross of Forgiveness, and after 'she' rendered 'her' homage to the Cross, all of them, one by one, carried 'her' on the way to the church." (Augusta, 1987)

- " Yes, Godmother, it was with the last peal, I remember, that was also so, as you said in the time of Cruz Herrera, (one of the former captains) because you were in the Saint' house, and you had enough time to rest until the third legion came out, then you turned back and went on to receive the Sayona . But now everybody is in a hurry at the moment of the third peal and few devils come to carry their mother." (Mocho Hernández)

- "It was nice, at that time, all the devils came and danced for the mother, also they used, as group, to throw her up in the air and catch her, then they embraced her expressing their care for the mother. They have to carry the mother" (Augusta)

But Ricardo Pecho de Gallo commented: " Now it is very difficult to do, Who can carry *Liberato*? (everybody laughed, because *Liberato* (the present Sayona) is a fat man, weighing at that time around one hundred kilos)

Speaking about the Sayona, Fortunato González Liberato said: "The Sayona is like a captain, and is the mother of the devils. I am like my godfather Néstor, who is the father of the devils. In the tradition we have to obey the first captain, although we are father and mother. The second captain is Chácara, and the third captain is Pito, We are more powerful than them, but that is like an Indian religion. The Indians used to have a God and always they had a Cacique a Chief, who ruled them. We can be chiefs but we have others who rule

us. I have been dancing devils for seventeen years, but as Sayona only four years. Here in Chuao the custom is that when you fall the first time, you become a son of the Sayona, then they fall down tied to her. That is the tradition and when the Sayona and the little devils are ten metres from the Cross of Forgiveness, she lets them go. At this moment they can run as they please. If one of the little devils get lost we have prayers, I have here the prayer of the Most Blessed Sacrament and La Magnifica.. Many devils fall as little Sayonas, with dresses like mine. You know the Sayona dress is different, and the mask also, it has a little beard also." (Liberato, 1985.)

"The Sayona never gets old, she is always young, but the father, the overseer is getting older each year." (María Tecla, 1989).

44. According to Corominas, (well known Spanish Linguist) *Mojiganga* is a Spanish word, which the most ancient form was *boxiganga*, (1603) meaning a group of reciters. In Quijote *boxiganga* was the name to designate a personage, picturesque dressed with 'cascabeles' (small bells) and carrying a stick used to show his histrionic abilities. Later, in the 17th century, the word named a toy, used in theatrical representations. In Quevedo's time *Mojiganga* was the name of a masquerade and also a carnival entertainment, in which people were acting on horseback. In the 18th century the *Mojigangas* were prohibited, then the word was only preserved in the metaphorical way meaning farce and mockery. Fernando Ortiz wrote to Corominas to express not be convinced by the etymology of the *Mojiganga* given by the linguist. But he replied, after an analysis of Ortiz arguments about the bantu origin of the word, that the theory around this African origin is too well built to be true, and he added that the fact that the Afro-Americans took the word is not a proof of its African origin.

Diccionario Etimológico de la Lengua castellana.

The Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz said that *Mojiganga* is a word and dance of African origin. " Africa invaded the world, both side of the Atlantic Ocean, with drums, xylophones and *zambombas*' and with their dances and dramatizations, *mojigangas*, *ñeques*, *gangarillas y balulus*. In the *Mojigangas* noisy, popular instruments were used, such as castanetes, flute, and obviously the small drum (tamboril)" *Tranculturación blanca de los tambores de los negros*. in Archivos venezolanos de Folklore. Año 1. N°2. 1952, p. 250).

Taking in consideration both positions and comparing to the oral tradition in Chuao, and also looking at the historical context it could be said that the Spanish medieval origin of *Mojiganga*, is more likely than the African, and at the same

time it can be speculated that the acceptance of the Mojiganga by slaves was possible because of the similarities to their own lost culture.

45. "In ancient times in Chuao, the devils used to have a very big woman doll, carried by a devil who was called the Mojiganga. This gigantic doll was dressed in more than 13 varas of fabric, (they said vara not meter at that time). They put on her a very big dress and they very much enjoyed carrying her about. However I never saw it. Don Venó (Venancio Bolívar) and Manuela his wife, told me that it was a very big doll, and that one threw it on the devils. As devil, you had to move with elegance, dancing and not allow it to hit you. It was part of the doll dance, a very nice and joyful dance " (Augusta,1989)

This comment of Augusta is very relevant, because it indicates that time when the devils were still doing this dance, was the turn of this century. Manuela Bolívar had told her that as a young girl she remembered how the devils used to dress and danced the doll. Manuela died in 1985, when she was 100 years old. If we refer to the written sources about the festivity during colonial times, this probably is one of the elements which survived from that time until the beginning of this century. Remembering all this past, Augusta became excited by the idea, that perhaps she could revive this tradition in Chuao.

46. They were punctual at that time, for example at 4 a.m. they were praying in the churchyard, and no devils took off their devil dresses afterwards when they were in the bar, and if they were there, the captain punished them. And of course they had no sexual relation with any woman during 40 days, the repentance days" (María Tecla,1989)

47. " I have observed that many things are not going on as before. The devils now are different, they are a little disobedient, and they do not want to obey my godfather Jesús Franco. A Captain like him, you cannot find. After Jesús it would be very difficult to find a captain like him. But before, I observed that a devil after the fall did not belong any more to anyone only to the Captain. He had to do whatever the captain wanted. If the captain said: "It is time to go to bed", he had to go. Sometimes the captain went with him to put him to bed, or said to another devil, please,take your brother to his home to rest, and everybody behaved quietly. A captain did not permit any devil to go to the bar, if he saw a devil there, he went to him and took him out from the bar and punished him by whipping him hard. He had seniority and no one disputed that. They obeyed. And the result was that, the devils at that time prepared the

Velorio and did not sleep with women during 40 days. They, in general, complied with all the rules.(Augusta 1985)

In the past the devils, after the fall, remained in the Holy House to eat. Their mothers or other women used to prepare the meal, a kind of soup made with sandpiper and vegetables, and took it to the House of Repose.(The house of the Blessed Sacrament). That was the custom and it also protected the devils while they were drunk because they did not go outside . (María Tecla, 1989)

48. "When the priest comes, the devils send somebody to bring him, they also give him food, because he gives the Mass. In past time when the priests did not come to Chuao, Don Veno (Venancio Bolívar) took the procession out with the Christ and I prayed . Now what happens, I work Wednesday, Thursday, making the altars, and not one of the devils helps me, and not one of you says to me "take this contribution to make the hole (meaning grave)for this wonderful old woman María Tecla, or has any consideration for us. I do not want any special thing for myself, but for this little old woman María Tecla, yes, she has carried the merit through all these years working for the devils, I think that the devils have to make a toast to her. She has been working much more than any priest and me also. Moreover if the priest comes we have to prepare everything in the church for him because he only gives the Mass, and the Majesty to the festivity, no more, and we do the whole work."(Augusta, 1985)
49. "No, they do not believe, the same happens to the young boys that I teach the Doctrine to. Nowadays the youth believes that the Corpus Christi is only a dance, to show off to the young girls, but it is not. You do not dance because of the young girls. You have to dance to the Most Blessed Sacrament, to your faith. This religion is something too big so that if somebody does not understand the religion it is better not to belong to it. But I was thinking that the Devil nowadays is afraid of young people, because in the past when people were real believers, they were very respectful. If they, by chance, broke the rules really strange things happened to them. The Devil was prepared to injure them." (María Tecla,1989)
50. "Look, the relic is a protection that the devils must carry obligatory. Because this is a strong religion, one has to prepare them protection. Something to protect them against all bad things. Ah, a really good anecdote happened to my father with the relics, a man cannot use any woman. Well, then, my

grandmother told him, look son, be careful that you do not sleep with so and so..., you know that you are dancing the devil, and you are wearing the relics. No, mother, said he. He had his lover, well what happened, he paid no heed and went to sleep with his woman, and he put the relics on the crucifix, he took them off, and he put them on the cross, and the relics were not there in the morning, when he got up to dress and put them on to go to dance. It was four in the morning, and he searched and searched for the relics, and nothing, he could not find them. The relics appeared here in my grandmother's house, they came here from the cross. The relics, they came by themselves from where he put them and they ended up here at the house, and my grandmother found them. But my son, she said, you left them. No mother, I took them off and put them on the cross in the house I slept. But Look, they are here, says my grand mother." (Augusta, 1985)

51. "The Narcisa's son only danced as a devil once, he told, what has happened to him the night of the Eve of Corpus Christi. He went out to have fun there, under the Alto (the name given to the house, which used to be the house of the Administrator of Chuao) and he told us that the day after, Thursday Corpus Christi, he could not find his relics. Later they appeared in the house of Mercedes Rojas, hanging on the cross of Leonardo Rojas. After this problem he never came back to dance devils" (María Tecla, 1989)
52. At the present time no mask has been exhibited in the Holy House. Some parts of the devil costume are in la *Casa del Alto*, which was converted three years ago, into a Museum, due to the initiative of Francisco Planchez, and with the support of the society of Corpus Christi, specially Pito Montiel, the third captain of the Corpus Christi festival.

CHAPTER THREE

Saint John the Baptist

The tradition of Saint John the Baptist

The important position of John the Baptist within Christian doctrine is well known. A brief reconstruction of his life is presented here to provide a doctrinal backdrop against which one can appreciate better the popular celebration under study.

John the Baptist is in the Christian tradition, the last of the prophets and forerunner of Jesus. He was the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth, and his birth was foretold by an angel (Lk 1:13-20). John's birth was miraculous, as Elizabeth was past the age of childbearing. Her husband was punished because he refused to believe that she would bear a child and that he should be called John. Elizabeth was Mary's cousin; and when Mary came to see her she was six months pregnant, and the baby leaped in her womb (Lk 1:41) Zachariah was killed at the time of the massacre of the Holy Innocents, but Elizabeth hid the infant in a cave where they were found by Joseph and Mary when they returned from the flight into Egypt.⁽¹⁾ John played with the child Jesus in Nazareth until he left his home for the wilderness. He then appeared on the bank of the Jordan, demanding repentance and baptism from his listeners. In the desert he declared "prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight"(Mk 1:3). He had proclaimed that one would come who could be mightier than he "The strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose (Mk 1:7). When he acknowledged Jesus to be the expected saviour, many of his disciples, including Peter and Andrew, left him to follow the young man from Nazareth.

John is the baptizer of The Messiah. When Jesus came from Galilee and appeared before John at the Jordan to be baptized by him, John tried to refuse him with the protest: "I should be baptized by you, yet you come to me" Jesus answered: "Give in for now". We must do this if we are to fulfil all of God's demands. So, John gave in. After Jesus was baptized, he came directly out of the water. Suddenly the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a

dove and hover over him. And then, a voice from the heavens said: "This is my beloved Son. My favour rests on him"(Mat. 3:13-17).

Herod Antipas, King of Judea, imprisoned John because he had denounced Herod's incestuous marriage to Herodias, his half brother's wife. John was executed and his head presented to Herodias at the request of her daughter Salome.

After his execution in Herod's fortress, John's body was buried by his disciples at a place believed to be Sebaste in Samaria, where his tomb was revered until it was destroyed by Emperor Julian the Apostate.

In early Byzantine art John is depicted, with wings, like an angel or a divine messenger as in the text:"Behold I send my messenger"(Mk1:2). He is depicted carrying a cross with a long stem, dressed in a garment of camel 'hair' with a skin girdled about his loins (Mk 1:6), and holds or has near him a lamb with a halo about his head. He is also depicted as a child.

John said of himself and Jesus, "I must become less and less and he became more and more". The liturgical placing of their birthdays in midsummer and midwinter is thus quite apt.

His feast day, the 24 June, coincides with the pagan midsummer festival which is associated in many countries with bonfires and other customs.

The festival in Spain

In Spain, as in the rest of Europe, the feast of Saint John the Baptist is very popular and massive participation of the people is evident in the celebrations held in towns and cities of Spain.

The festivities in Spain share some aspects, such as the organization of the feast by the Brotherhoods, the images of the Saint dressed specially for this day, the building of altars, the use of flags, the explosion of fireworks, the belief in the 'magical' power of the bonfire, waters and plants, groups or armed men, and bull fighting .

According to Julio Caro Baroja many towns in the North of Spain, such as some Guipuzcoan's towns, the provinces of Vizcaya, Navarra, Zaragoza and in the old Burgos celebrate St. John feast day with strong military feature including military parades, masked dances, processions of armed men, a dance of Moors and Christians, sword dances, beating of the shawn, and bull fighting.

On the other hand, in regions of Spain, such as Galicia, La Mancha, Andalucía, Valencia, Barcelona and Canary Islands the festivals have a strong relationship with the world of magic, the natural and supernatural, and the protection given to people in love affairs.(2)

Other sources, such as Spanish Literature, confirm the popularity of the day of St. John the Baptist. Many Spanish authors have written poetry, dramas and songs inspired by the festival of St. John the Baptist, but the earliest manifestation is found in popular romances.

For example, in the fragmented version of Count Niño the romance of Count Olinos, sung as an accompaniment to children's games, one hears:

No night is more celebrated
than the night of Saint John
there are lights and luminaries
that illuminate Christianity
At twelve midnight
Count Niño gets up
to give his horse water
at the sea's edge
As the horse drinks
he would begin to sing
and the girl inside the palace
would listen to him
Wake up, dear girl
wake up if you're sleep
listen to how beautiful
the little sea siren sings
no, mother, it is Count Niño
who is coming to court me
do not listen my daughter
soon we will have to kill him
do not kill him, no my mother,
so you will kill both of us.(3)

In the celebrated romance of Count Arnaldos, the miraculous events occurring on the morning of St. John.

"Who would have such fortune
upon the waters of the sea
as happened to Count Arnaldos
on the morning of St. John
with a falcon on his hand
he was going to hunt
when he saw a galley coming
which wanted to reach the land....."(4)

Another anonymous romance :

"The day of St. John
is a day of joy
make feast the Christian
and the Moors the Morerias.
Going days, coming days
come the day of St. John
Christians and Moors
celebrate solemnly
the Christian throw 'juncias
and the Moors 'arrayan'
to honour the festivity."(5)

The comedy, The night of St. John from Lope de Vega contains numerous references to the popular dances, the improvisation of verses and the custom of having one's hair cut so that it would grow back more abundantly. (6)

One popular poem from the same author says:

Let us go to the beach
on the night of St. John
the land is happy
and the sea thunders.
On the beach let us make merry
in a thousand ways
all of us crowned
with 'verbena ' and sprays..."(7)

A widespread belief is that St. John the Baptist does not know when his day is and thus is continually asking God. Then when God

answers, 'Soon it will arrive' John is overtaken by sleep. In Madrid the following poem is well known:

If the Saint knew
when it was his day
Heaven and Earth
would join together.(8)

According to Julio Caro Baroja, in his article *Mascaradas y alardes de San Juan*, the feast of St. John the Baptist, celebrated with masked dances was condemned by the church at various times, for example: In the Council of Aranda, 1473, the Archbishop of Toledo forbade "the celebration of the festivities of Nativity of Jesus, The Holy Innocent and Saint John the Baptist with masked dances, theatre and irreverent words because this type of activity causes dishonest acts and no devotion at all". (9)

In Navarra, in 1597, following the Council of Trent (1563) and the personal point of view of the archbishop : "the kind of celebration held on the festival of St. John the Baptist is prohibited, in and outside the church, and the person who disobeys this order will be punished and will have to pay a large sum of money."(10) He also forbade the dance of the Kings, the playing of drums and the carrying of flags. .

However the church could not stop certain customs, and the festivity of St. John the Baptist continued being celebrated in many towns of Spain. Nowadays, in Barcelona, for instance, during the festivity social barriers are eliminated, as the Catalan singer and author Joan Manuel Serrat has expressed:

On the night of St. John
when men of one hundred thousand breeds
share their bread,
their shirt and their overcoats.

But, the time when the festival of St. John was strongest in Spain coincides with the conquest of America (XVI century).

The celebration in Latin America

In Latin America the festival arrived with the conquest and has been continued ever since. In Cuba it was a real carnival. In Argentina, the anniversary is celebrated primarily by children and young people, who play games of love: couples also use the time of the festival to arrange meetings. In many provinces in the North of Argentina the feast of St. John the Baptist is celebrated with processions, prayers, songs and verses to the Saint, night games in which bonfires are lit and, blessed herbs, and "magic" water are common features. In Formosa (Argentina) where the inhabitants are mainly from Paraguay, most of them Guaraní, the festival is very similar to that celebrated in Spain, but people also practise fire walking. They say that St. John the Baptist is connected to fire because he is very powerful.(11)

In Brazil, the festive cycle of St. John and St. Peter can be related to its Venezuelan counterpart. The Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado, in his work referring to the Bahía State, said that the festival of St. John in some places of Brazil had "an especially agrarian character, people carve a hole in front of their houses, put in eggs and seeds, and plant a branch as a tree on this they hang flowers and corn. Afterwards each family prays and sing Salve Regina to appease an abundant crop. "(12).

In the State of Sao Paulo on the Eve of St. John's day the image of the Saint is bathed, which means that water will be abundant for the rest of the year, and that collected on this day is believed to cure diseases. The water has to be taken from a river or a stream, and its magical power is linked to the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan. They also carry the Saint in procession, praying and singing. The image of St. John is placed on an altar, made of bamboo, paper flags and flowers. People continue praying and singing to honour the Saint. For example:

"Come, come all of us
to the Jordan river
where Christ, Our Lord
was baptized by St. John".

(This verse is similar to those I have heard in Venezuela). People dance until sunrise, around bonfires or in different houses in which they drink and eat.(13)

In the Diario de Lima, Perú, in the year 1630 it appeared that the day of St. John was celebrated on the streets (*alamedas*), as in the past years, with a joyful feast. "Men and women sing and dance accompanied with musical instruments. They prepare every kind of food and have other entertainment."(14)

In Mexico, ritual baths in either rivers or in homes during the early morning hours are common, as is the practice of leaving a receptacle of water out during the eve of St. John, so that it will receive the saint's good influence when the stars are reflected on its surface. Likewise, the cutting of hair during St. John's day is quite popular, as Mexicans also believe that its growth will be more abundant.(15) Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, in the XVI century described the richness of the celebration and the active participation of the Indians.

The celebration in Venezuela

The date established by the Roman Catholic church for the celebration of St. John the Baptist coincides in the Southern tropics, with the beginning of the rainy season (called "winter" in Venezuela) in which copious rainfall coincides with abundant harvests. This fits well with the general explanation of water in the various celebrations.

Saint John's festival is celebrated throughout Venezuela. However the festivity takes on much greater importance than elsewhere in the coastal region of Venezuela, Distrito Federal and the states of Aragua, Miranda, Carabobo and Yaracuy (Map 2, p.16). In these regions were established the majority of the Venezuelan cocoa and coffee plantations, which harboured a large number of slaves of African origin during the colonial times.

The festivities of St. John are organized by confraternities, which were established in the country by the colonising missionaries. They encouraged people to found these institutions, in every populated area, for the purpose of collecting funds for annual festivities of the Catholic calendar. These organizations were called in the past confraternities, brotherhoods or *naciones*, nowadays their

common names are societies. Most of the members of the societies of St. John are women. Men can belong but, in the majority of the cases they play secondary roles.

The basic structure of the celebration is similar in all these regions. The festivities usually start on 23rd June, of the feast day itself, thereby initiating a cycle that continues until 16th July, the Virgin of Mount Carmel. Within this cycle of festivities is the feast of St. Peter on the 29th. of June. In some places the cycle begins the first of June.

All societies have a statue of St. John the Baptist depicted as a child. (Plate 49) There are three forms of musical performance associated throughout Venezuela with the feast of St. John the Baptist: *Sanguero*, (sacred songs and dances with drum) (16); *Cantos de Sirena* (songs of the Sea siren, no dances, no drums) (17) and *Golpes de tambor* (drums, songs with dances) (18). The devotees carry flags in honour of St. John. The votive offerings are a common feature in all these communities, such as giving dresses and dancing or singing in honour of the saint. They believe in the power of the water taken on St. John's day from a river or a stream. In Ocumare de la Costa and Cata (towns on the coastline of the State Aragua) they bathe the image of the Saint on the sea. In addition they perform the so-called 'meeting of the saints' in which people from the two towns go by boat and carry images of St. John, to meet at sea, where a procession takes place and the images greet each other.

Following the popular belief of St. John's sleep on the day of his birthday, in some towns of the States Aragua, Miranda and Carabobo, they sing the following song :

Wake up, my John, if you are sleeping
Wake up, if you are sleeping
from your deep sleep, wake up my John
because today every day of the years
come to visit you, my John.

In Curiepe, Miranda State, St. John is believed to sleep through the festival and only awakes on St. Peter day. When he asks about his feast day. Saint Peter answers him : Your day has already passed. Then St. John cries and people comfort him singing cantos de Sirena in his honour.

In the inland towns of Guatire and Guarenas (Miranda State) St. Peter's day is a particularly special celebration within the St. John cycle. This is based upon a legend. María Ignacia, a woman slave, begged Saint Peter Claver (a Jesuit priest who ministered to slaves in Cartagena, Colombia) to cure her daughter who suffered from a serious illness. She offered to dance on St. Peter's day for the rest of her life.

Saint Peter Claver performed the miracle and thus in remembrance every year in Guatire, people celebrate St. Peter's day going, first of all, to Mass, and then the members of the St. Peter's Society with black painted faces to represent slaves, perform dances and songs in the streets accompanied by drums. The comparsa (group of dancers and singers dressed in the same way) is led by two dancers, a man dressed as the slave María Ignacia, carrying a doll, which symbolize the daughter, (Plate 50,1) and another man representing St. Peter. The two dance simultaneously, simulating the petition and the cure of María Ignacia's daughter.

In Guarenas, the members of the Society of St. Peter, the Sanpedreños, go to Mass, accompanied by the Tucusitos (children dressed as Sanpedreños) (Plate 50,2, 3,p.288) then an image of St. Peter is put on a platform outside the church door. Two kinds of dances are performed in front of him : one, the Sanpedreños where sick children are carried and pleas are made to the Saint to cure them; the second one the parents and the children, already cured, dance to express their thanks to the Saint. Afterwards the image is carried in procession through the streets where on the way back to the church there is the meeting between St. John the Baptist and St. Peter. The images greet each other and perform a dance. When that ends, the Sanpedreños go to the parish house where the priest is waiting, and there, they perform the zapateado (a kind of dance with intricate, rhythmic stamping, similar to the use of shoes in tap dancing). This time the dancing is accompanied by the priest, who dances with them. It is a man's dance, but women can also participate. The *sanjuaneros*, at the same time go to the first captain's house, where they sing to the Saint and dance to the drums. Very late in the afternoon the members of both societies meet and eat a *sancocho* . (see p.180)



1. Cata



2. Ocumare de la Costa



4. Guatire



3. Cuyagua



5. Naiguatá

Different images of St. John the Baptist



1. María Ignacia



2. San Pedreños



3. Tucustitos

In other states, such as Bolívar and Guárico, children's games on the day of St. John still exist: for example children ride wooden horses, called little horses of St. John. On their steeds, the children spend the eve and morning of the festivity begging for: "my St. John, my St. John" Adults respond by giving them sweets and coins. It seems that in the past - the custom has been lost- adults carried out these circuits on wooden horses, making the same petition. (19)

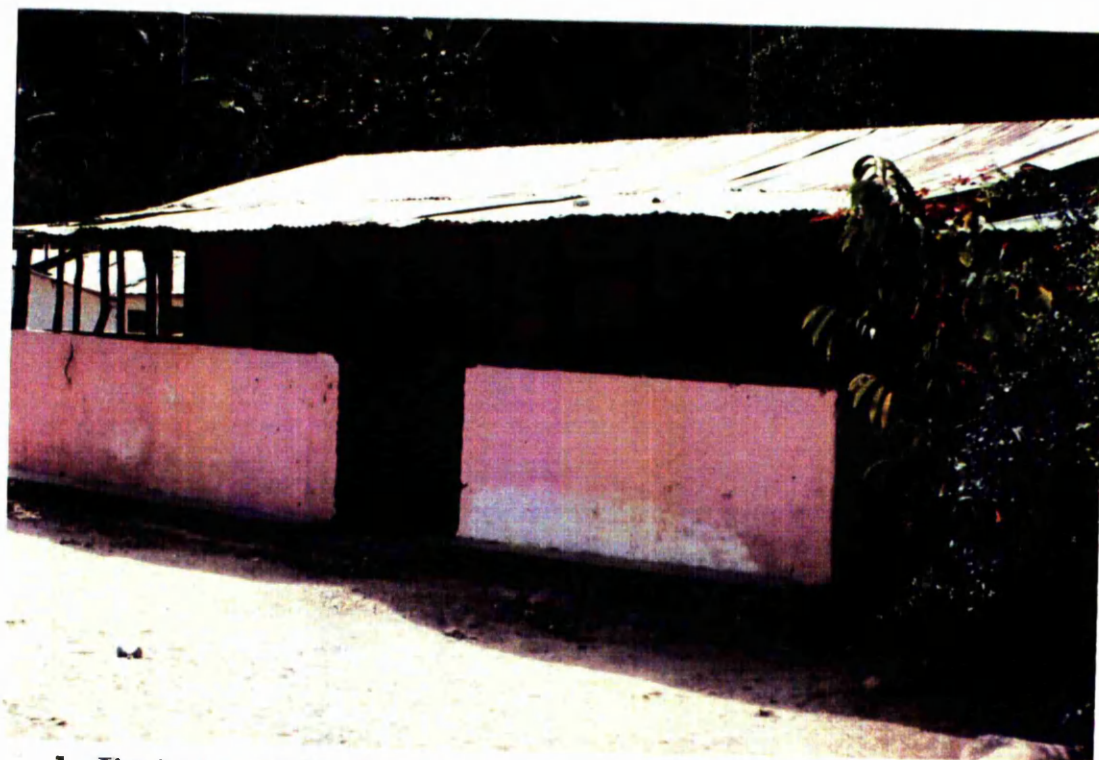
In Caracas, in one of the most populous sectors, the St. John parish, the procession of St. John the Baptist continues to this day. However it is not necessarily performed on St. John's day, but any Saturday in June, when it appears to have lost its religious significance and is more an excuse to dance to the drums. In places very near Caracas, like Curiepe and other towns of Barlovento region, the festivity has lost most of its real sense due to the influx of people from the city, who are more interested in dancing, drumming, drinking, fun and sex; however even here there is evidence of the vitality and energy that is associated with this popular manifestation elsewhere.

The St. John The Baptist Festival in Chuao

In Chuao, homage is paid to St. John the Baptist, messenger of Christ, to obtain his protection, to get his help in curing diseases, and in finding solutions to individual love problems. "He is a miraculous saint, people from here and from other towns plead him for the sickness of their sons, and he cures them. You ask him for help in solving some personal problems in love affair, or anything you wish. If he can, he gives you a hand, he will do. So, you light a candle or pray the Our Father to him. He is a very miraculous saint I tell you"(María Borges,1979).(Plate 51,2,p 289)

The origin

Catalina Mexía de Liendo, the owner of The Chuao plantation, was a religious woman, and one of her devotions was to Saint John the Baptist. In her will, which appeared in the Obra Pía, she said: "I order the celebration of masses on the days of the saints of my devotion, one to the Immaculate Virgin Mary, another to Saint John



1. The house of St. John the Baptist. 1984



2. María Tecla and St. John the Baptist .1989

the Baptist on his day, another to Saint Peter, Saint Joseph, Saint Anthony, Saint Cataline, Saint Domingo..."In the same document is the inventory of her belongings: "one golden chain with 40 golden balls and a golden image of the head of Saint John the Baptist."(Doc.17, 1671).(20) In an inventory of the plantation appears: "One image of Saint John very well maintained"(Doc.56, 1742).(21) In 1776, The Overseer of Chuao ordered "rebuilding, at least of part of the Church (which had been destroyed by heavy rain) before the first day of Saint John the Baptist, because of the Mass, which had to be held in this day."(22) This latter is the first written reference we have found to the celebration of St John the Baptist's day, which indicated that the feast was already established, but the precise date of the beginning of the festivity remains unknown.

According to the oral tradition of my informants (23) the first statue of Saint John the Baptist, that belonged to the Society was brought by a slave woman Damiana Liendo. According to the oldest informant Cayetana Veloz, who was 105 years old, the Saint John's festivity as it is celebrated today developed from the end of the 18th. century or the very beginning of the 19th. (24) She recollected that when she was little : "Damiana an old woman, she was small and senile, she wasn't in good health. Poor old woman. When I knew her, she used to go out of her house naked in public, so her family had to take special care of her. We, as children, didn't understand what was going on and made fun of her. My mother told me that Damiana was the first captain of Saint John the Baptist, and brought him to us in this era, but when I met her she hadn't any knowledge of it"(1979).

This is corroborated by others : "She was the chief of Saint John. At that time the procession was different, they took Saint John around every where in Chuao, including the beach by the sea. Damiana was very famous, she brought Saint John to Chuao, and when she died a woman called Planchez took her place. (José Rivas, 1979). "We didn't know what the festivity was like in those days, people told me that Saint John the Baptist was brought here by Damiana, this woman came from the path of the mountain, [the route from Turmero, through the mountain, to reach either the towns of Choroní or Chuao]. She lived and died here, and here she left her saint to the black people, to us. We feel a great devotion for

Saint John The Baptist."(María Borges, 1979). "Damiana wasn't a slave,I knew people of the same age, and they weren't slaves, such as a woman Fabiana, Cayetana's mother, she wasn't slave, she was a daughter of those slaves called manumisos (freedmen) and Damiana was a manumisa. She was first Captain of Saint John the Baptist. (Venancio Bolívar,1979)

The cycle of Saint John the Baptist festival

The description of St. John the Baptist cycle is largely based on the observations of the 1984 celebration. Although the writer has seen the cycle in 1980, 1981, 1984, 1985,1987 and 1989. The 1984 ritual was selected for the following reasons:

- After observation and participation of the festival in 80 and 81, a comparative analysis could be made and the overall format could be deduced.

- The Octave of Corpus Christi coincided with the festivity of St. John the Baptist. So it was possible to see both women members of the St. John society and devil's dancers.

- The presence of a priest, on the 23th of June, for the celebration of the eve.

- Candida Bacalao, the second captain of St. John the Baptist participated for the last time in the festival. (She died a few months later).

Before describing the festivity of 1984, there is one factor which is vital to understand and truly appreciate the importance of the St. John celebration, and that is that although the cycle has a basic structure provided by the Catholic liturgical calendar, it does allow room for enormous flexibility.

The Saint John Society

The Society of St. John is essentially an organization of women. The leader has the title of first captain; she is followed in the hierarchy of officers by a second captain and then a captain (male), and a secretary (also male).

Today's first captain is Berta Aché, second Captain, vacant since the death of Cándida Bacalao, but Anita Liendo is her temporary replacement. The Male Captain is Santiago Hernández (Plate 67, 2,p.34) and the Secretary: Pedro (Perucho) Sosa. In 1984 the second

captain was Cándida Bacalao and the male captain: Eleazar (Charli) Hernández. (25)

The *cajero*, the lead drummer, and the horse of Saint John (the man who carries the statue of St. John on his head during the festivity) are males from the community, who are also committed to the devotion to Saint John the Baptist. Although they don't ask for money, the Society pays them for their work, which is very difficult and tiring. At the present time the *cajero* is Pío Hernández (first captain's son) (Plate 52,1,p²⁹⁴) and the horse of Saint John is Néstor Liendo (Overseer of the Corpus festivity). (Plate 52,2,p²⁹⁴) Néstor and Pío were also the performers in the 1984 festival. Néstor informed me that he has carried the Saint ever since he inherited the post upon his father's death, and he expects to continue performing this task for the rest of his life. He hopes that one of his sons will eventually take his place.

In order to belong to the Saint John Society, a woman (or a man) has to be nominated by one of its members. Men and outsiders can be admitted but they are few. This nomination is examined by the officers of the society and, if it meets with their approval, the candidate then becomes a member. It is mainly a society of Chuao women.

Women members called *Socias* or *Sanjuaneras* have to pay the annual fee (presently 100 bolívares), pay for the offering made to the Saint on June 24, and other type of contribution that the members deem fit. For example, in 1988, an extra payment was given for the renewal of St. John's house.

All women can, in principle, belong to the Society, although the majority of the female members continue a family tradition. As a rule, membership follows an ancestral line of mothers, grandmothers and other female predecessors who have been close to, and taken an active role in the St. John celebration as singers and dancers. Song and dance are an essential part of the St. John festivity. These women preserve the Chuao tradition, not only because they transmit the ancient songs from one generation to the next, but also because they compose new ones, which invigorate the popularity of the celebration and encourage its continuance. The members vote for their leaders but their term depends on their efficacy and the quality of work, just as in the the Corpus Christi Society. Thus, the officers



**1. Pío Hernández,
St. John the Baptist's
drummer. 1989**



**2. Julio Bacalao
and Néstor Liendo
the cajero
and St. John's horse.
1985**

take their obligations seriously, and gain respect and leadership within Chuao society generally.

The decisions of the first captain are accorded due respect, even if, at any given moment, some of the members may be in disagreement with her. The importance of her role resides in the very nature of the festival of St. John. As it is a mixture of sacred and profane elements, maintaining order in the community can become a very real problem .

The duties of the first captain of the Society include organizing the St. John festivity; maintenance of the saint's house during the year; watching over gifts made to the Saint in payment for favours received from him and any other matter relating to the festivity or the cult of St. John. For instance her approval was required to film and record the celebration, and for outsiders to participate in the festivities for the purpose of the research for this thesis. She also controls the level of contributions from the society of St. John the Baptist to the festivity of the Immaculate Conception. Berta Aché said: "As Captain I have to dress the Saint, hold the *Velorio*, and organise the making of the chocolate, and coffee." (1989) For example, the society backed Berta's decision to improve the house of Saint John and she assumed the whole responsibility, including buying materials and organising the work force. (26)

However, although leadership and decision-making belong to the women of the society, the men play important roles such as protecting the women during the festival. "The male captain accompanies us during the whole festivity, taking care of us, and protecting us from any problem, which might arise, like a fight, or public disorder. This is a man's role. The best captain we ever had was Vicente Mijares (Candida Bacalao's husband), he looked after us very well. He insured that we were able to catch up on sleep when we were not included in the festivity. The male captain also has to provide the candles we need for the procession, and he is in charge of throwing the fireworks, during the festivity of Saint John the Baptist." (Berta Aché, 1989). The secretary's role is to keep a record of all matters relating to the Society. For example, the improvements made to Saint's John house, and the income and expenditure of the society. He can also offer his opinion on any matter, but the final decisions are in the hands of the women.

The Society has a house located near the Cross of Forgiveness (Map 8, p. 49) which is the meeting place. During the St. John the Baptist cycle the altar is erected there to pay homage to him from June 23 until July 16 of each year. Originally it belonged to a bachelor, and the house had to be 'baptised' before it could be converted into a sacred place. It is the only place in Chuao which has been baptized. (27) Before that, St. John did not have his own house, he used to stay in the first captain's houses for the cycle of the festivity. The present house was bought by the Society when Juana Liendo was the first captain, around 15 years ago. (Plate 51, 1, p. 290)

One enters the house through a covered corridor. A small room at the right-hand corner serves as a place for cooking and preparing hot chocolate for the celebration. In the middle of the corridor, a door leads into the large main room. There the altar to St. John is against the wall on the left side as one enters. On the right side, towards the back, there is another, smaller room, which holds a cabinet in which are stored the votive offerings to St. John, (objects which represent them, such as hands, legs, hearts, some of them made of silver or other metal), the vestments which have been given to the saint over the years, and the materials used to set up the altar during the festival of St. John. Since the altar is not set up at any other time, the house is used during the rest of the year only as a meeting place for the Society of St. John. Also kept in this smaller room are the instruments: *caja* (28) and *cumaco*. (29)

Preparation of the altar for the festivity

Women prepare the altar of the house on the afternoon of June 23. (Plate 53, 1, p. 29) First, they hang the blue satin cloth from the ceiling, to represent the sky. They cover the wall behind the altar and the proper altar with an assortment of cloth. The altar itself is approximately 1.50 meters wide and 1 meter high, made of masonry in a staircase fashion in three tiers. The upper and widest of the tiers is covered by a fringed satin rug and on it is placed lit candles, vases, a wooden cross covered in crepe paper in the middle, and flanked by arrangements of artificial flowers. On the second tier, exactly below the cross, they place the image of the Immaculate Virgin, patroness of Chuao, and many natural flowers and candles. On the third tier are placed all sorts of ornaments: figures of hens,

Plate 53

Preparation of the altar, 1984



1. Yolanda Almenar, Anita Lienda, Berta Aché, Sabina Chávez making the altar, 1984



2. María Tecla sings *Cantos de Sirena*. Yolanda and Eddy hearing her, 1984

old prints, postcards from foreign countries, birthday cards, vases with artificial flowers, plates with a profusion of candles on them. None of these elements appears to fulfil any other function beside decoration. The arrangement of this last tier serves to demonstrate the innate artistic sense of the women, for they convert this heterogeneous mixture into an integrated, colourful and quite beautiful whole. As a final touch, they add two trophies won playing *bolas criollas* (a Venezuelan version of the Mediterranean bowling game), a baseball and a statuette of a horse.

The *sanjuaneras* want to do their best for their Saint. They arrange the altar every year, using the same objects and decorations that are kept carefully from one year to another. Brilliant colours and lights create an atmosphere of joy, which is one of the characteristics of Saint John. They perceive him as a Saint full of gaiety, and consequently the whole ambience, which surrounds him has to be very lively.

The image of St. John

Since the festivity is dedicated to St. John, a description of this image is relevant to an understanding of the ritual. It stands, after all, as a permanent reminder, throughout the year, of all aspects of the festival, the songs, the dances, the drum rhythms.

The statue represents St. John as a child; it stands 60 cm. high and it is made of gypsum plaster. The figure is white, both in skin colour and racial characteristics; the face is oval in shape and baby-like in its chubbiness. A dimple marks the chin; the nose is elongated, and the small mouth is painted red. Large black eyes gaze downward under strong black brows and abundant curly black hair. The figure is in a standing position, with its right arm forward, the elbow bent so that the right hand is at the height of the abdomen, not touching the body. The fingers of the right hand are separated, as if in movement, and appear to point to something. The left arm is also positioned separate from the figure's body, the elbow bent and the forearm pointing upward, so that the left hand reaches the height of the left shoulder. The figure looks as if it might be preparing to dance. In the left hand is a long, thin rod from the top end of which are suspended ribbons of different colours, with red predominating. These represent the votive offerings given by Saint

John to his believers. (Plate 51,2,p.290) During the processions and dancing, these ribbons add movement to the figure, creating an effect similar to the women's flag-waving.

The statue is dressed in brilliant and luxurious vestments. The long, full skirts of sleeveless dresses cover the feet with several petticoats underneath. These enhance the movement of the figure during the dance of St. John. There is no fixed colour for the dresses, which can be red, blue, yellow, pink, or any other hue. A ribbon, which can also be of any colour, belts the waist. On this ribbon are pinned cards, which generally contain expressions of thanksgiving for favours conceded by the Saint; on the day alms are collected, the paper money given as donations is also pinned to the ribbon. On June 23rd, the figure's head is uncovered. On the 24th, the day on which the alms are collected, the saint wears a hat, which can either be the typical wide-brimmed *cogollo* (straw hat), or any other variety. The hat is fastened to the figure's head with a ribbon. Other types of head wear may be substituted, as in 1984, when Perucho Sosa gave the Saint a motor cycle helmet.

The image stands in a niche in the church for most of the year, but for the processions of the St John cycle of feasts the image is placed on a rectangular table and securely tied down so that it can be safely carried and danced with during the festivity. The table is generally covered with a piece of flower patterned cotton cloth. The wooden table is quite light, so that it can be easily carried, and the person carrying it is known as St. John's horse. On either side of the figure, towards the front of the table, two candlesticks from the church complete with candles, are affixed.

St. John has more than fifty dresses which are all kept in the house of the society and belong to the 'treasure' of the Saint. They are given to him in fulfilment of promises, and cannot be sold or given away. There is no particular order for dressing the Saint in any of his clothes. The Captain and other members choose it according to their taste. But each year, on the 23rd., they dress the statue of St. John in a new dress to start the festivity. During the cycle of the feasts they change the dress of St. John several times, depending upon the number of dresses he gets as gifts from the believers.

"Formerly, in Damiana's time, St. John was dressed only with ribbons, but once, a man made a promise to St. John and came with

a dress to put on him, since then we dress St John. One of the songs we sing to St. John is a very ancient one because it refers to the time St John was dressed only with ribbons."(Berta,1989).

"At that time, Saint John was only covered with ribbons, no dresses at all. But Santiago Díaz [a Chuao man, St. John's devotee] was the first one to dress Saint John the Baptist, to fulfil a promise."(Venancio Bolívar, 1979).

The origin of the image is not clear. People of Chuao say that the image is very ancient, and was brought to Chuao by Damiana Liendo, (23) (p. 199) When the image lost a foot, people of Chuao took it to Puerto Cabello to be repaired. There, the image was changed for another and when they took it back to Chuao and realized that it was not the same image, all the members of the society of St John the Baptist and other important people of Chuao went to Puerto Cabello to rescue the original image. They succeeded and brought it back. Since then It has been forbidden to take the image outside Chuao. When it needs re-painting the Captain has to find the right person to do the job, so she takes the image with her, usually to Choróní, but she remains with the image until the work is done. "Last year,1988, I took him to be re-painted, one of the national guards (a soldier) of Choróní did it for me. In twelve years St John has been re-painted three times."(Berta, 1989) For the meetings of St. John societies in Venezuela, they take another image, the society bought for this especial purpose.

Dealers in colonial period artefacts are continually on the look out for older figures in Venezuela. This probably explains the attempted substitution.

The fact that St. John the Baptist is shown as a child appears to be part of the Spanish colonial heritage and is standard throughout Venezuela. The 24th of June is, of course, the birthday of the saint (His martyrdom is celebrated in August) Women in Chuao call him *hombrecito*, little man. It is a way of expressing devotion to him. At the same time the suffix has a significance, which has to do with protection. However it is a two- way protection, women take care of him, and he gives favours to women.

Clothing of the women members of the St. John Society

Nowadays the women dress themselves according to their economic situation, and although colour and style is irrelevant there is a marked preference for the colour red. In spite of their relative poverty, on the night of St. John, the *sanjuaneras* wear either a new dress or one they have renovated. For practical reasons this needs to be full, for in the women's dance movements, the play of the skirt is of great importance. This is particularly true for the traditional dances to the rhythm of the drums. The women adorn themselves with flowers or wear ribbons in their hair. On June 24th, many, though not all, wear hats to protect themselves during their long sojourn under the hot sun. On their feet some wear sandals or slippers, although the majority go barefoot. (Plate 55, p303)

In the past women wore dresses made from a combination of blue, yellow and red. A long wide red scarf covered the head to make a turban, with the rest of it hanging free. Francisca Liendo, a *sanjuanera*, who does not live in Chuao but in Caracas used to dress in this way. She was the only one. (Plate 54) The others could not afford the cost of this dress. María Tecla and Francisca told me that it was this type of dress, which belonged to the feast of St. John. As to these particular colours, María Tecla said, "red is the colour of St. John", (red being the liturgical colour for the feast days of martyrs), but she had no comments about the use of other colours. "In the past the flags were in blue, yellow and red, to match the dress" (Berta, 1989). Some of the *sanjuaneras* asked me to buy red material for them, however they did not want plain red but flowers or other designs in any colour, but preferably white on a red background.

The musical structure of the cycle of St. John the Baptist.

There are as noted above, basically three different types of musical compositions in the festival of St. John the Baptist:

1. *The Sanguero*
2. *Cantos de San Juan*, also called *Cantos de Sirena*, *Voces de Sirena* or *Sirena*
3. *Golpes de tambor* or *Golpe*.

These three forms create a whole which has two basic parts: In the first, the *Sanguero* is played from St. John's house and continues until the *sanjuaneras* reach the church; later *Cantos de Sirena*, (called also Songs of St. John) are heard, and once again the



Francisca Liendo
with the traditional costume
(no more in use). 1984



1984.



Sanjuaneras

with new dresses.

1989

Sanguero is sung, on leaving the churchyard and is continued until they reach the houses which are visited.

The second, includes the *Sanguero* in the different houses, then the *Cantos de Sirena* are sung, and afterward the *Golpes de tambor* (dancing to the drums) begin. These routines are always followed, although sometimes there is no dancing to the drums.

The *Sanguero*

It comprises of songs and dances accompanied by the rhythm of the *caja*. The themes of the songs are, in general, greetings to the Saint and they narrate part of the history of St. John from the people's point of view. Indirectly, this popular version of events stems from the original source within Roman Catholic preaching.

The *Sanguero* dance according to María Tecla, traces its origins to the saint's death:

"The *Sanguero* that we perform was the beheading of St John by Herod, it comes from there. Herod was having a party, he invited John, but John told him, 'I'm not coming to you, Herod', and he answered him 'Why?' and John told him, 'Because you are a sinner, because you use your brother Philip's wife and also the wives of your sons.' Afterwards, Salome asked for the head of John because she hated John because he did not want her." (1985)

The first captain leads the singing; she sings the verses, while the rest of the women who are members of the society, as well as those who are present repeat the refrain. Due to the length of the celebration, the captain may decide to pass on the command of the *Sanguero* singing to one of her fellow Society members. In this case the ritual singing continues in the same manner. The *socias* and specially the first captain prepare new *Sanguero* songs every year, and depending upon the acceptance of the new songs, they will be added to the repertoire of *Sangueros* already established.

"This year Sabina said to me: Berta sing one *Sanguero*. I sang the first thing that come to mind. But I always prepare some verses for the festivities. In Saint Peter I sang one to Sabina, and said to her, Look Sabina this one, is especially for you:

"The person who wants to sing with me
has to drink my blood,
I have my tongue ready
and the throat with hunger."

And Sabina said: "This woman is incredible, she just invent things..."(Berta,1989)

The *Sanguero* is a dance in honour to St. John performed by the women. It consists of two steps towards one side (always the right side first), and two towards the other. Dancing thus, the women advance, all the time waving the flag that follows the rhythmic movement: up, down, forward, following the rhythm of the feet, and of course, the beat of the *caja*. The women of the Society each hold the flag in their right hand and a rattle and a white handkerchief are bound to their right wrist.

There are four variations of the *Sanguero* dance:

- The *Sanguero* performed by the women, as they come from the St. John's house to the church where they pass before the saint in parade, and into the church to the rhythm of the *caja* and waving their flags.(Diagram 7,1.)

- The *Sanguero* performed by both St. John the Baptist carried by his horse Néstor Liendo and the women of the Society, in the church and as they enter the churchyard, which demonstrates the dominating role of the Saint. It is the women who follow the image of St. John and who get out of his way so as not to hinder his movements, rather than the other way around. (Diagram 7,2)

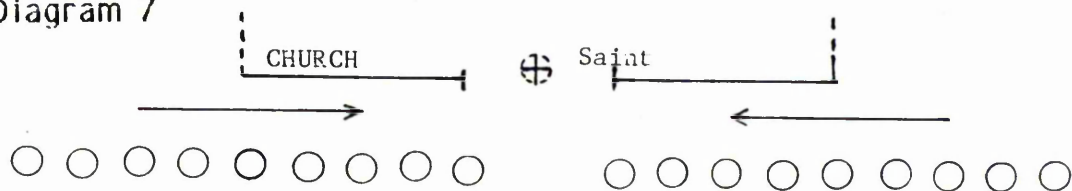
- The *Sanguero* performed by the women in the streets as they follow the Saint, in which they perform only the basic steps, up in double quick time. St. John goes in front, the first captain at his side, followed by the rest of the women, who carry lighted candles, (Diagram 7,3)

- The *Sanguero* danced by the women in the houses. In this case, the women form a circle around the Saint, moving forward as they go. (Diagram 7,4)

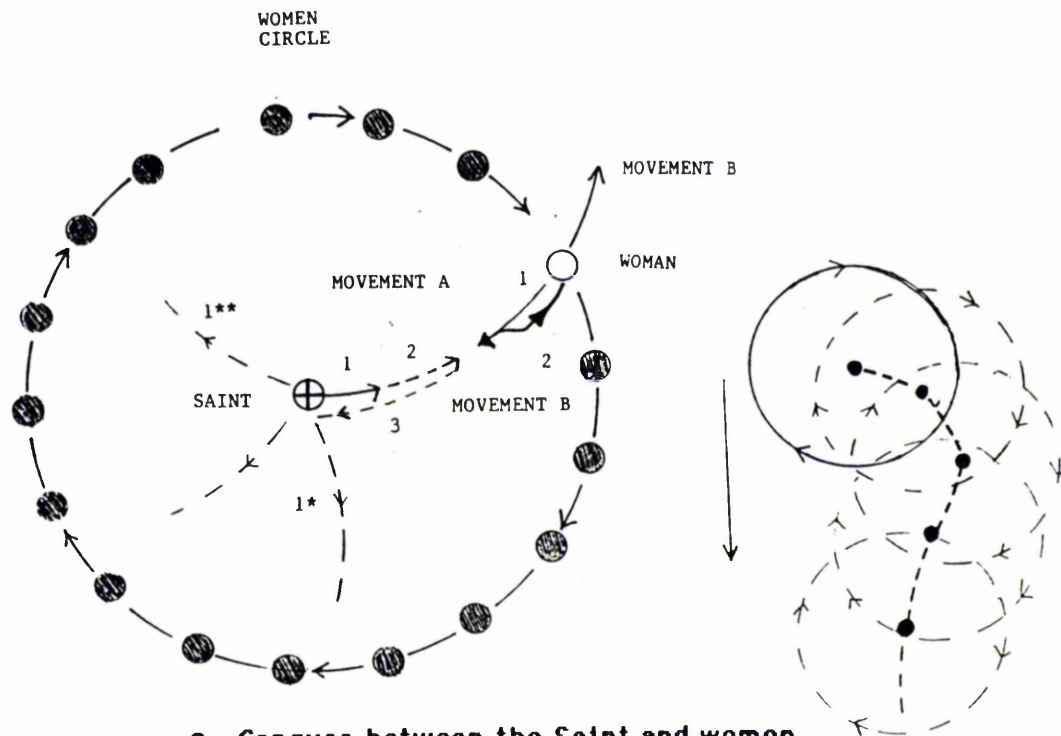
Cantos de Sirena, or the songs to St. John

These songs structure that is antiphonal. Verses are improvised on the basis of the previous intervention. Each phrase ends with an "ah" signalling the next woman that she has permission to participate into the singing. The origin of the name can be traced to the epoch of the Romancero español (p the Romance of Count Niño).

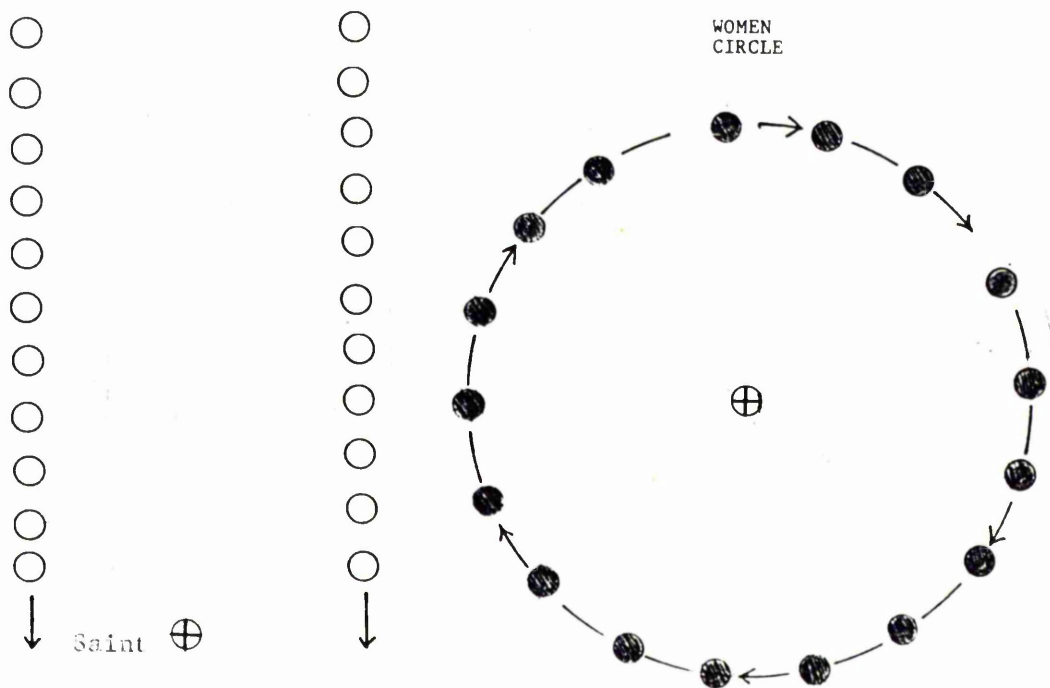
Diagram 7



1. *Sanguen* in front of the Church



2. *Sanguen* between the Saint and women



3. *Sanguen* through the streets

4. *Sanguen* inside the houses

Drums and dances are not performed with *Cantos de Sirena*. Songs render homage to the Saint, whether the themes are sacred or profane subjects. For example, some verses relate to petitions made to the Saint, and others a thanksgiving for favours received from him. Some are dedicated to the events of every day life. Creativity abounds, for although the singers may repeat some verses that have become fixed in the oral tradition through repetition over the years, they improvise many variations that relate to the processes of social and political change or events within the community over the past year and during the celebration of the festivity itself.

Golpe, Golpes de tambor, dances to the drum.

The festivity of St. John the Baptist is identified throughout Venezuela with the *Golpe*. In Chuao, as in the rest of the country, this part of the festival is of great importance.

The *Golpe* are a combination of drum rhythms, verses and dance. There are different drum rhythms, accompanied by dance which make up the raucous, boisterous part of the festivity. Great variety is to be found among the *Golpes* collected in Chuao. In general, the *Golpes* have amorous themes, the lyrics speak of waiting for the loved one, of uncertainty about the other's love, of deceit. New drum rhythms are composed nearly every year, but ones that been popular in the past are also played and sung. A woman sings the verses and the rest of the *sanjuaneras* and the public doing the chorus. Only men beat the drums. It must be pointed out that in Chuao the women do not play the drums during the festivity of St. John; Pío Hernández (the St. John's *cajero*) beats the *caja*, but when he becomes tired, he is replaced by other talented and skilful men, who have been previously commissioned for this activity. The *Golpe* starts with the beat of the *caja* and only after midnight does the dance to the *cumaco* (drum) begin.

The dancing that accompanies the drums also varies. In Chuao, men and women approach the dance differently. Nevertheless, some basic movements characterise the way of dancing to the drum in Chuao and distinguish it from the dancing in other regions of Venezuela. There are basically two types: the *golpes*, which are danced with *caja* and those, with the *cumaco*. However, in both a circle is formed within which a couple will dance. As anyone feels

the need to dance, they enter the circle, those already dancing have to make their exit. Nobody ever dances alone, for it is always a male and female dancing together. Only one couple is allowed to enter the circle at a time.

The man's dance has in general, very little variation either, excepting, the dance called the Lizard's cave (p339) But the women's dance has many variations.

The *golpe de caja* is also called : Corridito (which means : 'running'). The man holds his arms up high, in a semicircle above his head and with almost imperceptibly small, rapid steps he slides his feet on the ground, moving his body from the waist down as he comes near the woman. He follows her and tries to shelter her within his arms, and court her. The position of the man's arms are as if he were opening up space for the woman, gives her greater liberty in her own dance. Without lifting her feet off the ground, the woman takes small steps, performing rapid, rhythmic movements of her hips, which seem to be independent of the rest of her body. In this fashion she makes a kind of short run composed of many intricate small steps, facing the man, then she makes a half turn, which she accompanies with a graceful swishing play of her skirt, which she moves with her hands. This gives the *golpe de caja* an obvious Spanish flavour, reminiscent of XVIII -century dances, mixed with the African heritage, thus the dance is a mixture, a hybridization. However, both men and women dancers improvise and create their own individual styles on the basis of the essential motions of the dance. (Plate 62.337) In the *golpe de cumaco*, the movements of the body from the waist down become more energetic and faster and the woman's dance resembles to a far greater extent that of the man's.

The *Sangueos* and the *Cantos de Sirena*. accompany the image of St. John the Baptist, whereas the Saint is removed from the room in which *Golpes* dancing take place, and taken to an adjacent room, where he cannot see the dance. *Golpes* are not permitted in either church or in the Saint's house, probably for their overt sexual content.

This musical structure is shared by the St. John and St. Peter festivities, throughout the *Velorio* (vigil) and the rest of the festival. However, for the *Velorio* of the Virgin of the Mount Carmel, the

musical composition follows the pattern of the *Velorio* of the Corpus Christi devils. (*Velorio, Corpus Christi*, p. 150)

Synopsis

In Chuao the festival cycle of St. John the Baptist begins on June 1st with an announcement made by the women of the Society, that the feast day is on June 24th.

On June 23rd, the *Velorio* of St. John is held and the saint is transported from the church into St. John's house.

On June 24 th. , the birthday of the Saint, alms are collected

On June 25th or 26th the celebration of Juana Manuela, the mistress of St. John the Baptist, takes place.

On June 28th the *Velorio* of St. Peter is performed and on the 29th June when the feast day of St. Peter is celebrated, St. John will again be revered.

Finally with the *Velorio* held in honour of the Virgin of Mount Carmel and the feast day held, on July 16th., the cycle of St. John the Baptist comes to an end. On that day, the saint will be carried around the town for the last time, and will be returned to the church until the following year. Generally the priest is not present at this time.

However, after the festival of the Immaculate Conception which is always attended by a priest, on December 9th, the statue of St. John re-emerges for a celebration and mass in a "far more reverent manner", appropriate to the Catholic ritual.

Description of the cycle of St John the Baptist

The first of June.

The cycle of *Velorios* de Mayo to the cross ends in Chuao on the 31st of May, (Note 31, p. 43.) and June 1st dawns with the first announcement made to St. John that his birthday is near. At 4.30 a.m. the image of St. John is dressed by members of the society: Berta Aché (the first captain), Anita Liendo, Eddy Liendo and others. Afterwards, Jesus Franco (the first captain of Corpus), in charge of the church, open the church doors and places the image of St. John on a table in the archway .

At 5 a.m. the women of the society get up to the ringing of church bells played by Jesus Franco, the beat of the *caja*, played by Pío, and the explosion of fireworks, set off by 'Charli ' Hernández. They meet at the St. John's house (dressed for everyday life) and led by the first captain, wave coloured flags and rattles. This is accompanied by the beat of the *caja*, and they dance the *Sanguero* on their way to the church. Berta also sings a verse and the women repeat the refrain: "Oé, oé, oé, ea, Hail Mary, Hail Mary" sung in a very high falsetto:

Loe, Loe, Loa...

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary

St John The Baptist with joy

Loe, Loe, Loa,

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary

Saint John the Baptist got up

Loe, Loe, L oa,

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary

Saint John the Baptist in the morning

Loe, Loe, Loa,

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary

Saint John the Baptist with emotion

Loe, Loe, Loa

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary

Saint John was in the church.

Loe, Loe, Loa...

These verses are fixed, and repeated by the *sanjuaneras* every year. They enter the churchyard and stop before the statue of St. John, which is placed at the Church door to sing the Ave Maria, song as above, and to perform the *Sanguero* dance. The *Sanguero* at this point involves a particular set of movements. The women dance in a straight line going right and left, thus weaving the flags, crossing one woman with another, in front of the image of the Saint. (Diagram 7,1) They then stop the dance and sing him verses. Each woman in turn recites her verses for the Saint while the rest of the women sing the chorus.

Isabel Bolívar, (an old *sanjuanera* and a good singer) begins, followed by Berta (the first captain), and Felícita (another *sanjuanera*) the fixed verses:

Loe, loe, lo lo lo lo loa

St. John the Baptist with joy

-On the first day of June, on the first day of June,

I got out of my bed

Loe, I got out of my bed,

on the first day of June, the day of St. John

Chorus

-They call him St. John the Baptist

when he was preaching the gospel,

they took off his head

Chorus

-Good morning, my saint,

good morning, good morning,

I have come

to congratulate this saint

Chorus

-Loe, lo loe, oh, Isabel,

your legs are hurting you,

and so are mine

Chorus

The day I was born,

all the flowers were born,

the day of my baptism,

all the nightingales sang [line borrowed from a famous

Mexican folk song, famous throughout Latin America]

Chorus

-The day I was born,

three beautiful flowers were born,

the sun was born,

the moon was born,

and the stars came out

Chorus

Oh, lo loe, lo loa, glorious St. John the Baptist,

glorious St. John the Baptist

give us the best song.

(1984)

This part of the festivity is called the Ave María. With these verses women of the society greet the Saint. The *sanjuaneras* mix

references to the history of St. John with personal events, such as the mention of the beheading of St. John and the birth and baptism of one of them. They also express love, joy of life through images of nature: flowers and bird chants, creating a special, agreeable atmosphere to greet the Saint.

In 1984, some other verses sung by the *sanjuaneras* Yolanda Almenar, Sabina Chávez and others were:

Loe,loe, loa

St. John the Baptist with joy.

i)"Little boy of my delight

I have come to venerate you

Little eyes of fine pearl

And little mouth of diamond

(refrain)

ii)The little birds and I

Fly at the same moment

They sing their joy

And I weep my sorrow

(refrain)

iii)When I have more work to do

I sing with greater happiness

Because the tasks themselves

Keep me company

(refrain)

iv)I don't sing because I know how to

Nor because my voice is good

I sing so that no more sins

Fall on my sorrows.

(refrain)

v)My heart and yours

Went to paradise

My heart adored you

And yours also love me

vi)If you want to know my name

i will tell you singing

I'm called Yolanda Almenar

If you want to know me. (Appdx,II, *Sangueros*, p.416)

The contents of these songs are greetings to the Saint, references to his history, to the place of women in Chuao, and their need for friendship. The imagery of these verses belong to a cultural heritage, the Modernismo, a poetic movement, very important in Latin America from the end of the 19th. and first half of the 20th. centuries.(30) Briefly, this movement took special care of the combination of words to create a very musical rhythm. Comparisons, and metaphors using the jewels and all precious stones were very often incorporated. The content of this type of poetry is less important, than its aesthetic value. This movement, in time, became very popular, and the types of images of the poetry passed to ordinary people, who used them to create popular songs, in which as a paradox the words are used not to play with the aesthetic value of the words but to give more sense to the content of the song. Some of these songs belong to the oral tradition and most of them are heard with some variations in all the celebration of Saint John. However, they can compose^a new each year. In 1984, *Sangueos v* and *vi* were sung for the first time. These verses are a kind of presentation of Yolanda Almenar (sanjuanera : singer and composer) to St. John and at the same time an expression of her love for him.

At around 8 a.m. the women finish with the verses and the *cajero* beats a rhythm which indicates that they have to continue with the celebration. Then the women performing the *Sanguero*, place the image of St. John the Baptist once again in his niche inside the church, until the eve of the Saint's day. However, the *sanjuaneras* then go to the houses of the former captains of the Saint and sing and dance *Sanguero* there. Marcolina Liendo (a former captain of St. John the Baptist) said: "On the first of June the *sanjuaneras* go to Church, singing and dancing and later on, they visit the houses of the Captains, they always come here. I am very sad, every first of June and prefer to stay at home, because my mother died, some years ago this day. That's why I don't go to the Ave María of the first of June."(1985).

23rd June: The Eve of the feast of Saint John the Baptist

The morning celebration

In 1984, on the night of the 22nd, Berta and other members of the society dressed the image of St. John in rich clothing. Usually however they do this very early in the morning. (Plate 64,1, p~~342~~ At 5 a.m. a group of men led by the male captain, Charli Hernández lit fireworks, rang the church bell and the drum med loudly to signal the opening of the festivity. Jesus Franco opened the church doors and placed St John on a table to the right of the doorway to await (as the first of June) the women of the society.(31) The women,led by their first captain, Berta Aché, proceeded from St. John's house to the church dancing and singing the Ave María. (Plate 57,1~~316~~) In the churchyard, which became again the centre of the events, they repeated the same performance, as on June 1st,in front of the image of St. John. (Plate 56,2~~315~~)

In 1984, Cándida Bacalao (32) arrived late in the churchyard and she greeted the writer with the following *Canto de Sirena* :

"When I left my home
I said good-bye to no one
the stones wept blood
and the sun did not want to come out.
The day that I leave
I will have to make three crosses
One to bid farewell
and two to never return.
Jesus Christ is a teacher
who sees all things
He does not know vengeance
nor ever acts in bad faith.
Jesus Christ is a teacher
who does all his things
water undoes salt
and salt undoes water.
I am far along
because I have a belly
and it hurts me
but it doesn't come down.
The closed door



1. Isabel Bolívar singing *sangreos* 1981



2. Cándida Bacalao, Eddy Llendo singing *Cantos de Sirena* In the house of St. John the Baptist. Pío Hernández and Julio Bacalao observe. 1984

June 23rd. The Eve. 1984



1. Berta Aché, first Captain, María Tecia and other women performing the *sangueo* following the beat of the *caja* . 1984



2. Women singing *sangueo* in front of the Saint. 1984

where can the daisy be
where is the daisy
there, there, there, there, and
she will come looking for me."(33)

After this interlude by Cándida, the ritual develops as it did on June 1st. They repeated some of the *Sanguero* songs of the 1st. of June but with the new verses composed by the *sanjuaneras* for that year. (34) After each one of the *socias* have danced, they made the sign of the cross in front of the saint and began with the *Cantos de Sirena*.

Each woman had her turn. Everybody swayed to the music and responded to the dynamic chants. At no time were they motionless before the Saint, but rather, their bodies participated in the rhythm, moving and addressing not only the Saint, but also their fellow members in a kind of dialogue. They repeated the ceremony already described for the first of June, but since there were more people in attendance the performance was more lively.

At around 8 a.m, the first captain give a signal to the *cajero*. Berta started singing to indicate the *socias* that they have to move forward to the next part of the festivity. The beat of the *caja* and verses are the same every year.

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Saint John the Baptist with joy (chorus)

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary, St. John the Baptist today is your day.

Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary St. John the Baptist with joy.

Néstor Liendo, St. John's horse lifted the table to which St. John is tied, and placing it upon his head, he proceeded to "dance the Saint" in the church. The *sanjuaneras* sing and dance to these *Sanguero*, in the same manner every year.

Look at how he comes

look at how he goes away

Saint John is leaving and bids farewell

he comes in the early morning.

Chorus

My little courtesan's hat dragged on the ground,

what I do not deserve, my hat deserves.

Chorus

On the ground is what I don't deserve,

my hat deserves .

Chorus

(1984)

The women of the Society followed the Saint performing the *Sanguero* to an increasing frenetic rhythm of the *caja* . The Saint approached them, and when they least expected it, Néstor Liendo, - the Saint John's horse danced against the women of the Society, trying to knock them down. When some of the women fell down everybody laughed, but the dance continued. (Diagram,7,2, p.306)

This rhythmic change of the horse backward and forward and at times incorporating circular movement constitute together the basic steps of the St. John *Sanguero* . This type of *Sanguero* is performed inside the church and in the churchyard. (a further explanation of this is given on the night performance,p.323)The participants left at about 8.30 a.m. and led by St. John the Baptist they visited the houses of the *socias* .

No special decorations were made in these houses. Most living rooms were however emptied of all furniture to leave space for the Saint's table to be placed in the centre, and so that the women could have space to move around to perform the *Sanguero* dance steps. A room was also prepared to shelter the Saint when the *Golpes* began. In some houses, in a corner of this room, they had a small altar made from a table covered with a white cloth, on which were placed, different images of Saints. The selection depended upon the beliefs of the owner, but a picture of St. John is always there.

In general, they visit the houses of the women in a hierarchical order, with the exception of the first captain's house, which is the last to be visited. Houses of women currently living are visited, as also are the homes of former captains who have died. (35) This is a way to render them homage and recognition. (Plate 56,2,p.315)

At the doorway of each house, Néstor,"Saint John's horse", danced again, several steps forward and back; it appeared as if he would enter, but then it seemed as if he changed his mind. Finally, he entered, but then he stopped and left the table on the floor. The women placed it in the centre of the living room. Then they lit candles on each side of the Saint and they began to dance the *Sanguero* in a circle around him, for about 15 minutes. When the beat of the *caja* stopped, the first captain Berta, faced the image of the

Saint, and led the *Cantos de Sirena* . While this was going on, each woman listened and awaited her turn; the order of their performance was not fixed, for particular houses. It seemed rather to depend on their relative abilities in verse-making.

A *Canto de Sirena* is given as an example: (different women sing)

-The firefly which gives light has already arrived, the light-giver has already arrived.

-Light-giver, the firefly which gives light, the light-giver has already arrived.

-Light-giver, the one who walks, the one who walks, from the living room to the corridor.

-Corridor, the one who walks has already arrived, ay! The one who walks has arrived,

ladies and gentlemen, from the living room to the corridor.

-Corridor, at the door of the church, at the door of the church, I saw two men walking.

-In the centre of the church, in the centre of the church I saw, ladies and gentlemen, two

men walking.

-Ay! Walking, I saw two men walking, they were Christ and John, who were being baptised.

-Baptised, at five in the morning, John, I got up and got dressed.

-I got dressed, I got up and got dressed, at five in the morning I got up and got dressed.

-I got dressed, and with tears and sighs, John the Baptist, remembering you.

-You, remembering you, with tears and sighs, John, remembering you.

-Remembering you, that on the River Jordan, a thousand marvels have been seen.

-Have been seen, ay! On the River Jordan, a thousand marvels have been seen.

-Have been seen, that on the River Jordan, that on the River Jordan, a thousand marvels

have been seen, ah.

-Have been seen, ay! On the River Jordan, that a thousand marvels have been seen, ah.

-Have been seen, that Christ baptised John, that Christ baptised Saint John, that Saint John

baptised Christ.

-Christ, you got me out of my house, you got me out of my house, John.

-Take me back there, ah,

-Back there, ay! You took me out of my house, you took me out of my house,
take me back
there.

-Back there, ay! Early in the morning, John the Baptist, before the sunrise.

-Sunrise, early in the morning, early in the morning before the sunrise.

-Sunrise, tomorrow in the morning, ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow in the
morning before
the sunrise.

-Sunrise, before the sun, singing the Ave Maria, do not miss the best part.

-The best part, we sing the Ave Maria for you, you have the best, ah.

-The best, how pretty the Baptist is, how pretty the Baptist is, how pretty the
Baptist is
with his red dress.

-Red, how pretty the Baptist is, with his red dress.

-Red, how pretty the Baptist is, ladies and gentlemen, with his red dress.

-Red, Jesus Christ gave it to him, Jesus Christ gave it to him, with blood from
his side.

-From his side, Jesus Christ gave it to him, ladies and gentlemen, with blood
from his side.

-From his side, ay! Their song, the "turplal"(a bird) and the linnet, improvised
their
song.

-Ay! Their song, one day in the morning, in the mountain and in the field.

-In the field, one day in the morning, ladies and gentlemen, ay! in the
mountain and in the
field.

-In the field, when Christ came to the world, he came in a white poppy.

-Poppy, ay! A saint with two faces, ay! A saint with two faces and he speaks
only one tongue.

-One tongue, ay! A saint with two faces, ay! a saint with two faces and he speaks
only one
tongue.

(1984. This *Canto de Sirena* is usually performed, with slight
changes according to the events of the year.)

Berta Aché, could not explain the meaning of these verses. Her
only comment was that they are old and came from ancient times.

After a while and according to the wishes of the owner of the house *Golpes* were performed. (While people always permit the *Sanguero* dances and Cantos de Sirena, not everyone will allow the *Golpes*). However, before these drum dances began the Saint was removed from the living room and placed in an adjacent room, where he cannot see the dancing. As María Tecla said: "St. John has to be removed because he could not see his negros dancing to the drum". (36) Then, the rhythmic dances to the beat of the *caja* began. The men, who until now have not participated actively in the celebration, gathered around the drum. A circle was made, leaving enough room for a couple to move around and dance within it. The beat of the *caja* sets the rhythm:

That's how it will be, it will be
That's how it will be, it will be,
el canto de la sirena

(As Yolanda Almenar informed this *Golpe* was composed by the dead Machu [a first captain of St. John many years ago. People like it, and each year it is sung.)

Loo (Chorus)
dark man if you love me
don't tell any one
Ay! loo
don't tell anyone
put your hand in your chest
and tell your heart to be silent
Ay loo!
love is like a small insect
that through the eyes goes in
through the eyes go in
when it arrives to the heart,
my body shivers
that's how it will be (chorus)
a sorrow takes away sorrow,
and a pain takes away pain,
that's how it will be
and a pain takes away pain
from the claws of sorrow
Ay loo!

the gentlemen will forgive my voice,
that no being so great
that's how it will be
because my voice is not so great
is why I sing to you
the canto de sirena
That's how it will be
I don't sing great,great,
neither bad, bad,
that's how it will be, loe!
that's why I sing great,
when I am half drunk.
that's how it will be, loe!

A couple performed the dance inside the circle. They did so separately, without touching each other. As it was described above (p.211). The rules of the game are established and no one violates them. This phase lasted for as long as the first captain ordained; then the *caja* is silenced, the dance is over, and the singing to the drum is ended. A few minutes later, the *caja* started again beating the *Sanguero* and St. John is fetched from the room where he had been waiting. After extinguishing the candles, all headed towards the home of another member of the society, where the ritual described was repeated. In this manner, the group visited all the members, until they reached the home of the first captain, which was the last house to be visited. Afterwards at around 1 p.m., St. John was taken to the church, where the *Sanguero* between the Saint and the women (as done the early morning) was performed. The *sanjuaneras* left the Saint in his niche until night time, when they again took him out of the church to be watched at the house of the Society of St. John. Everybody then went home to rest or to take care of the family, and feed the children.

The preparation of the altar

During the afternoon, the women spent around three hours making the altar and the hot chocolate to be offered during the evening's festivities.

In the 1984 performance, the following *sanjuaneras* : Sabina Chávez, Edith Liendo, Natalia Ladera, Marcolina Liendo, Berta Aché, María Tecla Herrera, Cándida Bacalao, Brígida Hernández, Yolanda (Nené) Almenar were all there. They sang as they made the altar. (37, and p. 31²) (Plate 53,2,p.297)

When they had finished with the preparation of the altar and the chocolate, everyone went home to have some rest . At around 6 p.m. Berta Aché with Anita Liendo, Eddy Liendo, Sabina Chávez and other members of the society went to the church to change the dress of St. John for a new luxurious sleeveless dress. The rest of the costume remained the same. Afterwards they went home to eat, have a rest and get dressed themselves.

Night performance: The *Velorio*.

Just before 8 p.m. the church doors were opened by Jesús Franco, and the image of St. John was placed as in the morning. At 8:00 pm, as is established in the ritual, the male captain, Charli Hernández, again exploded fireworks, Jesus Franco, pealed the church bells and Pío Hernández, beat the *caja*, to announce to the community that the festivity was ready to continue. In 1984 the Mass of the Eve of St. John the Baptist was also held, because the priest, Ignacio Castillo, was in Chuao. He was assisted by María Tecla and Augusta. After the Mass, the whole community of Chuao, all smartly dressed, plus others who had come especially to the festivity, gathered in the churchyard to wait for the continuation of the celebration. The women went to the St. John house from where they set forth, dancing the *Sanguero* towards the church to fetch the saint:

Loee loea loee ay! Lo lo loa (Chorus)

Loee the bells pealed, the bells pealed and Saint John appeared.

Chorus

Loee, Saint John the Baptist, good evening I say people,

good evening I say to ladies and gentlemen...

Chorus

Loee the bells pealed, the bells pealed and Saint John appeared.

(1984, but also other years.)

The women continued singing and dancing *Sanguero*, as in the morning. (Plate 58,1, 325)

Again, the saint was danced by Néstor, "the horse". The morning's dance was repeated, but had now acquired more importance. Néstor put the saint upon his head, wearing a turban for comfort's sake. He was dressed in long trousers (jeans) and a T-shirt. and was bare-footed. As soon as this was done, he began to jump in step forwards and backwards, following the rhythm of the *caja*. He followed a straight path quickly followed by a turn, during which the saint swayed, the ribbons billowed up, and the saint's dress moved, all thus giving the impression that St. John was flying through the air. The women of the Society sang the same chorus of verses, as in the morning, which describe the *Sanguero* movements performed by his horse : (Plate 58,2, 325)

Look at how he comes,

look at how he goes"

He wants to come out

He wants to go in(Chorus)

Why should that be

Pretty women

The loads of women

Wants to leave

Wants to come in

Saint John you are called

Why should that be

What is his name

How will he be

He wants to come out

He wants to go in

Pretty women

The loads of women

(1984, other years the same *Sanguero* is sung)

1. Berta Aché sings *sanguero*. Anita Liendo, Eddy Liendo and other women following her.



2. Néstor Liendo, St. John horse dancing *sanguero* . 1984

St. John left the church and continued dancing in the churchyard, the *sanjuaneras* had to get out of the way and perform their own steps at great speed, in order to avoid being trampled upon by the Saint and his horse. Moreover, the women had to leave him plenty of free space, as they could not guess which direction his dance would take. Special mention must be made here of how Néstor, San John's dynamic "horse", holds the table legs with his arms, never letting the saint lose contact with his head, all the while imparting notable energy and vitality to the dance he creates. With impressive ardour he straightened up with the Saint at one moment, making him sway giddily the next. Each dance was a new creation, a new combination of the basic elements. This *Sanguero*, shared by the Saint and the women of the Society was a sort of game, a form of communication. The Saint's own dance was different from that of the women; it was much more complex, with totally unexpected movements. Quite often, the women did not know where the Saint was heading, and, were unable to anticipate the direction of his dance, and many times they had to run to get out of his way. Apart from the man who carried the Saint, this was a women's dance, and the men did not participate. (Plate 59, p 327)

This "running away" is a traditional part of the women's dance, in which they prove their expertise as dancers in evading the attack of Saint John's horse while at the same time following him, but always maintaining the basic steps of the *Sanguero*. The value of this dance is not only aesthetic: within the ritual cycle, the *Sanguero* fulfils a preservative function, serving as it does as a means of reaffirming the fervour of the women's devotion to their patron saint.

It must be pointed out that Néstor, the man who played the role of St. John's horse becomes very absorbed; his face has an ecstatic expression and he seems impervious to his surroundings. As he danced, he paid no attention to anyone who happened to be in his way.

During these moments, Néstor, as St. John's horse, becomes the interpreter of the wishes of the Saint, (as he said once) who is present and dancing without restraints of any kind. Néstor wears no mask, yet he is masked without doubt, fulfilling as he does the



. St. John the Baptist and the women performing sangreo
1984

conditions inherent in the concept of mask: rather than the object itself. The mask is something which separates the performer from the rest of society. In other words, this fact of separation creates the illusion of new space and time in which the players, in general, can act in unusual ways and in freedom from normal social constraints, in order to reveal or perhaps conceal something of significance for the culture.

In the house of St. John the Baptist.

After this dance, the women of the society follow St. John, who dodges them and advances towards the house. The remainder of the Chuao community lit the way with candles and observed the dance of St. John and the women of the Society. Thus they reached the Saint's house, still waving their flags and singing: ..."He wants to go out, he wants to go in..." St. John, carried on the head of his "horse", performed a complex and energetic dance, which followed the rhythm of the *caja* and the singing of the women, until the moment, which no one could predict, that he chose to enter. (Plate 60,1, p.329) The women members danced around the image. They approached, they advanced and retreated, until Néstor placed the image of St. John on the altar. (Plate 61,1,p. He always followed the same *caja* beat and the women sang the same refrain: "Look at how he comes/ Look at how he goes...". Once Néstor placed the Saint on the altar, beside the cross, the music stopped and silence reigned. After, he had taken the figure of a horse in his hands, he made the sign of the cross, and said a mute prayer, laid it near St. John; (perhaps in a sense, the horse upon the altar served as a representation of him.) (Plate 60,2,p.329)

"Before Néstor was selected to be the St. John horse, one man used to take out the Saint, he was Trino, Filomena's man. He used to drink a lot, even in the festivity of St. John, and sometimes couldn't remain standing. But when he took the saint on his head, it was incredible, this man's *Sanguero* was marvellous, without making any mistake. You didn't realize he was totally drunk. I think the Saint gave him some special strength, because to me he gave also special strength, because I don't eat, don't sleep, don't drink, and I don't become hoarse even if I drink cold water, during the whole festivity, and I always complied with all my duties as first captain. Nothing

June 23



1. St. John the Baptist entering his house carried by his horse.



2. Néstor Liendo, St. John's horse placing the image on the altar



1. The altar of
St. John the Baptist

2. María Tecla leading
in front of the altar.
the rosary

bad happens to me. But few days later I start to feel sick with some pain in the belly."(Berta, 1989)

Then the women members began to recite *Cantos de Sirena*, through which the bulk of the petitions to the saint are made, as well as the thanksgivings for favours received from him. Afterwards, they prayed the rosary, led by María Tecla. (Plate 61,2,p3 30)

After praying, the women members, that were in charge of its preparation brought the hot chocolate on trays and distributed it among those present. A piece of sweet bread was given with each cup. Adults were served first and then the children. The people spent the night in this manner, sitting on benches around St. John's altar, praying and reciting *Cantos de Sirena*, which were a mixture of old verses and their own compositions. The recitation of verses was not restricted to the member of the society, and any devotee can make their own verses. In general, however, only the women participate, although it is sometimes the case that a man who has made a promise to the saint fulfils his obligation by reciting some verses in his honour. This was the case in 1984 with Eustoquio Liendo (one of the oldest Corpus Christi devils). Although there is no prohibition of male participation, it is restricted to what the first captain deems appropriate. However, it is only in the house of the Saint that occasionally, a few of the men recite verses.

Late night. The continuation of the *Velorio*.

As the night wore on, the mood became more 'sensual'. Rum had been passed around among the participants and the drums began to be heard. Although they were not played in the saint's house, where *Golpes* are prohibited, the instruments were set up outside, in the street, right in front of the house. These different drum rhythms make up the raucous boisterous part of the festivity.

Thus, usually two activities take place in parallel during the night: *Golpes* (Plate 63, p338) in the street outside St. John's house, and *Cantos de Sirena* (Plate 56,2,p315) within the house. There is usually a great deal of dynamism and moving in and out, because the people participate in one activity or the other, spending a period of time with the verses and another with the drums, according to taste and preference. Some participants chose to remain all night in one of the locations.

An enormous variety of rhythms can be heard during the night; they are played in no special order, for their sequence is determined by the wishes of the participants, who ask for one or another beat.

During the 1984 festivity, three *Golpes de caja* were given. They represent the variety of rhythms, the different ways of dancing to the drum and contents involved in them. Generally however they are played with *cumaco* but Berta said that they matched better with the beat of the *caja* . They are :

Darling, darling, give me your hand, for I'm leaving;

Bolívar, Bolivita, Bolívar;

Good-bye Urbano with this pain.

The Lyrics

- Darling, darling, give me your hand, for I'm leaving (Chorus)
(The word "corazón", meaning "heart" in the original Spanish has been glossed as "darling", so as to capture the meaning intended here as an amorous appellation.)

Darling, darling, how can you want

Me to go

Chorus

Darling, darling, as a penance

To the town

Chorus

Darling, darling, the way being

So long

Chorus

Darling, darling, to walk it

On my knees

Chorus

Darling, darling, the rum

Is delicious

Chorus

Darling, darling, it's delicious

But it is bad

Chorus

Darling, darling, but let him raise

His hand

Darling, darling,

Who has never had a drink

Chorus

Darling, darling, if I had

A girlfriend

Chorus

Darling, darling, who would help me

Sing

Chorus

Darling, darling, I would take from my

Pocket, [money] to smoke

Chorus

Darling, darling, tomorrow I die

For me the world is finished

Chorus

Darling, darling, in mourning will be dressed

The streets, where I used to walk

Chorus

Darling, darling, pretty eyes,

Treacherous, because they look at me

Chorus

Darling, darling, they are bitter

For others and sweet for me

Chorus

Darling, darling, any cigarette

That goes out on you, do not

Light it again

Chorus

Darling, darling, if your [black] man

Has forgotten you, do not

Love him again

Chorus

This is a *Golpe de caja* which belongs to the society of St. John, (that means that is an old *Golpe*, anonymous) It is danced as it was described above. The lyric has an amorous theme.

Bolivar

Ay lo je je, Bolivar, Bolivita, Bolivar (Choir)

It is said that Bolivar is dead,

Bolivar is not dead, no!
Ay ! loee! Bolivar went to heaven looking for freedom
As I get here I put on the ground my flag,
and in my song I say long live Venezuela!
It is said that Bolivar is dead
Bolivar died already
But before he died he left us freedom
It is said that they already conquered it
but not freedom
but this is life will it prevailed
freedom will always prevailed.

(Informant: Yolanda Almenar. Anonymous, belong to the St. John Society)

This *Golpe de caja* was performed three or four times during the 1984 celebration. I also have heard it, other years. It would be old, perhaps, from the beginning of the 19th century, as a result of Bolívar's visit in Chuao in 1816. He is in Chuao a lively figure. Freedom and new life is linked with his name. Thus the expression of their love for Bolivar is totally spontaneous.

"Good-bye, Urbano with this pain"(Chorus)

This damned pain does not want to go away

Chorus

I've got it at the waist already

I've got it in the middle already

Chorus

I'm dying already, people

Chorus

I'm dying people

I'm dying with this pain

Chorus

I have it on the bottom of my foot

And this damned pain

Already got me in the middle of my chest

And even reached my bones

Chorus

I'm dying and I'm dying

I'm dying with the pain

Chorus

In the lyrics of Good-bye Urbano, love is expressed as sudden physical pain, and the dancers represent the exclamation with movements of their bodies. In this variation, the dancing is closely related to the content of the song; here, the woman is the principal performer, as with her bodily contortions and facial expressions, she responds to the lyrics of each verse. Individual preferences exist among the dancers, and in the case of this particular *Golpe*, it is one of Edith Liendo's favourites; indeed, she is the most proficient in its performance. The rhythm of this *Golpe* belongs to the society of St. John, but the verses were composed by Yolanda Almenar, in 1981.

Generally, as the night progresses, the rhythms become more forceful. After midnight, around 2 a.m. the men bring out the *cumaco*. "On the night of St. John, in the *Velorio* we place the *cumaco* outside the house, you know the *cumaco* cannot be carried up, you have to put on the ground. We have many different kinds of drum dances and songs. Anyone may like one more than another. I like the verses I invent because I like to sing high." (Berta, 1989)

The female first captain is vigilant and establishes order when necessary. This watchful attitude corresponds to what Cándida Bacalao said at one point: "The condition for being captain is that she knows how to govern the saint. So that the people do not come and create a noisy disorder with him." (1984)

The *cumaco* dancing is more lascivious and sensuous. It seems to heed the call of ancestral voices. Body movement predominate. The rhythm of hips and feet seem independent of the remainder of the body and respond to the call of the drum and the words of the songs. (Plate 62, 1, p.) These make use of very direct language, or may insinuate meanings, in a metaphorical way. The dance acquires a principal role, for the music and singing serve to support the dancing, but at the same time the dancers have to be aware of the music, and match their movements to the rhythm. If they don't, they are not considered 'good', and when that happens skilful dancers enter the circle to substitute them. The music goes on all night long; the women take turns singing, and it is during this time that new *Golpes* are presented. As to the verbal content, some *Golpes* are sexually highly charged, and the corresponding dance performances include body movements which respond to the words.

These performances are rowdier than others, and the dancers pepper them with enormous doses of mischievous lewdness.

"The drum or *Golpe* is danced in different ways, the *caja*, for example is a dance in which you have to run quickly without taking the feet off the ground, making figures with the skirt, as María Tecla does, she is a very good *caja* dancer. (Plate 62,2, p337) With the *cumaco* you dance different, people shake and don't run. The man maintains the same position as in the *caja* with his arms up, but also he twists much more than in the *caja*. But you know, today the younger people dance both, more or less in the same way, they don't want to run following the *caja* beat, they dance as they wish. But I can tell you that Eddy Liendo is a good dancer, very similar to her mother, who was first captain and died many years ago. The dead Lucia, (God bless her) she used to dance *caja* beautifully. Maritza Tagliaferro, she is a real dancer, she has a special gift to dance and can perform any kind of dance."(Berta, 1989)."

In 1984, among the *Golpes de cumaco*, the **Waist** and the **Lizard cave** were played. **Waist** is very popular. It is performed every year and several times. Sabina Chávez ^{says} that this *Golpe* belongs to the Society, it is a very old one. She does not know who was the former composer, but this particular one is a variation she performed in the 1984 feast. It is notable that the word waist (*cintura*) -as used in this *Golpe* signifies the sexual act; the movements of both the male and the female dancers are clearly to incite. It can be played either with *caja* or *cumaco*, but better with the latter.(Plate 63,p.338)

Waist (Chorus)

That's the way to move it

Waist

You move it sideways

Waist

You move it to the front

Waist

The way you move it

Waist

Your waist dances

Waist

To the front and to the back



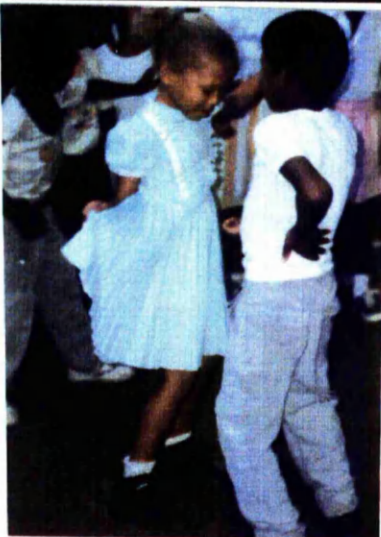
1. Cándida Bacalao and María Tecla dancing to the drum.



2. María Tecla and Pío dancing to the drum on June 24th. 1984



1984



1989

Different generations dancing to the drum

Waist

Like the fish

Waist

Like the vulture

Waist

Oh, that's the way to move it

Waist. (Sabina Chávez, 1984)

The Lizard's cave is danced to the beat of the *cumaco* and is played late at night, when only the most fun-loving are still dancing. It is one of the most erotic and openly sexual of the amorous *Golpes* (This belongs also to the Society, nobody could inform who was the composer. They said that is an old one, perhaps from the time of slavery). It is not generally danced early in the celebration, for the mood needs to be heated up by the preceding *Golpes*. Beside, its realisation requires great skill by both the man and the woman who dance it. If danced by a couple without sufficient expertise, the performance detracts from the *Golpe's* intended meaning and the result is mere pornography. In order to avoid the possibility of this deviation from the composition's original significance, the woman who is first captain of the Society, Berta Aché, will not permit this *Golpe* to be danced by any but the most expert couples. As it is not forbidden for other people to substitute for the ones who are dancing, should either a man, a woman or a couple whose skills are not sufficiently developed attempt to perform this particular *Golpe*, the captain interrupts the drummers, and, at her command, the rhythm is changed.

Look for the lizard's cave

There it is (Chorus)

Look for the lizard's care

Chorus

Look for it below

Chorus

Look for it above

Chorus

Because I feel like it

Chorus

Hit it, drummer

Chorus

Hit it hard

Chorus

Come over here

Chorus

Go look for it, my lizard

Chorus

Look for the lizard's cave

Chorus

Hit that drum hard

Chorus

In **The Lizard's cave** the male dancer plays the role of the *mato*, a large tropical iguana. He drags himself on the ground on his belly, moving his body, head raised in imitation of the animal, all the while desperately trying to find the cave, a euphemism for the woman's genitals. The woman, who must wear a wide skirt, approaches the lizard, inciting him with her hip movements and raising her skirt, insinuating her desire to let him enter the cave. The man pursues her, she escapes, and thus the dance progresses. The beat of the drums becomes more intense mirroring the lizard's desperation. The moment he thinks he can fulfil his desire, the woman, with quite amazing dexterity, throws her skirt over his head, twisting and raising her arms in such a way that the man's head is wrapped and he is trapped. Then she turns quickly and throws him over on his back, leaving him helpless and unable to reach her. Thus ends the dance. As may be surmised, it takes great skill to perform this *Golpe* particularly on the woman's side, since there is nothing simulated at all in her entrapment of the man and her forcing him into submission. For in no way does the man allow the woman to capture and overturn him for the sake of the performance. This happens only if the woman has the expertise to accomplish it. I have observed performances in which the man defeats the woman, for she is unable to dominate him. Among the best of the woman dancers of this *Golpe* are Maritza Tagliafierro (sanjuanera and very good dancer) and Sabina Chávez (sanjuanera, composer and dancer); among the men, Domingo (a Chuao young man, *sanjuanero*, drummer who performs the role of Black Bird in the Shepherds festivity in December) and

Niño (a Chuao old man, *sanjuanero*, who prepares medicines with herbes to cure, for example, anaemia). For some people the performance comes to an end, but the most *parranderos* (merry people) continue dancing drums, until the dawn of 24. June.

JUNE 24

Saint John The Baptist Day

This is the day the saint collects his alms, receives votive offerings for favours granted and also, new petitions.

As before, the day began around 5 a.m. with the explosion of fireworks, the beat of the *caja* and the pealing of the church bells. The women members of the society are dressed well and wearing *cogollo* hats (typical Venezuelan wide-brimmed hat)) or flowers in their hair in preparation to accompany their Saint with the respect demanded. Most of the society members gathered in the Saint's house. St. John's vestments were changed by Berta and Anita, and on his head he carried the *cogollo* hat, as do his *socias*. (Plate 64,2, p334) After singing the Ave María in his honour, in front of his altar, Yolanda Almenar (Nené) performed a *Sangueo* composed for the 1984 celebration, which is new expression of her love to the Saint:

Saint John the Baptist of my life
you were a child just like me
that is why I love you so much
and I give my heart to you.

If you want me to take
A best jewel from this world
I take my friend by the hand
And leave love to one side.

The statue was tied down to the table by Néstor and Berta, and taken out of the house by St. John's horse (Néstor), with the women following behind singing and dancing the *Sangueo*. They proceeded to the church. At the churchyard, the women and St. John carried by his horse as on the previous days, danced together in the manner already described.

After dancing in the churchyard for about half an hour the *sanjuaneras* began their procession through the town. Every house is

Plate 64



1. St. John the Baptist waiting for the Sanjuaneras. 1984



2. Brígida , Anita and Berta dressing St. John. June 24th. 1984

visited, beginning with the Holy House, (Plate 66,p.345) followed on the house of past captains (the house of the present first captain is the last to be visited), this took eight hours, or more, until 4 or 5 p.m.

In every house they sang the following fixed *Sanguero* verses, to collect the saint's alms. The first captain started singing, accompanied by the chorus:

For the alms you gave him, ay! Saint John will repay it to you.(chorus)

Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar

Sacrament of the Altar,

give alms to the saint,

Ay! for he has a long way to walk

He has a long way to walk

Chorus

Or the following variation:

"Oh Sacrament of the altar,

give the Saint alms,

for he has a long way to go,

the alms that you gave him

St John will repay

God give you as much money

as there are sands in the sea

May God repay you in your soul

and let you enjoy it.

The chorus is the same as the first song.

Coins were collected in a money box carried by the first captain, and notes are pinned to the dress of the saint. (Plate 65,p.344)

In 1984 they visited the following houses in the order listed: Julio Bacalao, the *cajero* of the Corpus Christi festivity, who is married to one of the *sanjuanera*. This house lies en route to the upper part of Chuao, called La Toma (a small water reservoir and pump), Pablo Borges' house, where the procession goes every year to perform the entire ritual (*Sanguero*, *Cantos de Sirena* and *golpes*), because he has made a lifetime promise to the Saint. In this context: life time promise means that he has to receive the Saint every year and do the entire ritual in his house, and also give alms according to his position until he dies. Pablo Borges is María Borges'son, one of



June 24



St John the Baptist collecting
his alms.1989

June 24



1. St. John the Baptist visiting
(the Holy House). 1984



2. Néstor Liendo and Pío Hernández
going to the Holy House. 1984



3. Women performing *sanguero*
in the Holy House. 1984

the older *sanjuaneras*, and he himself is the present captain of alms of Corpus Christi, (Plate 37,2,p.216) and Camilo Borges' nephew. (p.186)

The group then visits the homes of Juana Bautista Bolívar, Pablo Castillo, Benita Aché, Gilberto Castillo, Gilberto Tagliaferro, Ramona Liendo, Isabel (Veloz) Bolívar, Pedro Montiel, Julia Chávez, Marcolina Liendo, Lolo Liendo, Eulodia Liendo, Martina Bacalao, Mercedes Hernández, Rosa, (the nurse of Chuao), Edita González,(37) Edy Liendo, and Nemesio Herrera (María Tecla's grandson). All these people, members or devotees of St. John the Baptist, are visited every year. (Plate 67,1,2,p.347)

Afterwards, they crossed a cleared area where a sports field is to be built, and reach the house of Francisco Plánchez, then to the house of Lucrecia, and after to the house of Pedro Sosa. There St. John's hat was replaced with a baseball cap and a cape made of red fabric was draped over his shoulders. Candles were lit for St. John, the whole ritual was performed again, and a lot of drinks, rum and *guarapita* (sweet home-made fruit liquor) were offered in Pedro Sosa's house. Then, in Cándida's house, the revellers sang and danced *Sanguero*. At this point, Anita Liendo approached the group and announced that she wanted someone to buy St. John's vestments from her. One of the women present touched the dress to see if she wanted to. By so doing, she had fallen into a trap and must pay a fine, for the saint's clothes are not to be sold. This type of practical joke is always played on persons who do not know much about the ritual. At the home of Natividad Mijares, one of the old *sanjuaneras*, Anita Liendo and Lucía Hernández change the saint's vestments because they were complying with a promise they have made.

With the exception of Isabel Bolívar and Julia Chávez houses, in all these places already mentioned they entered and performed the whole cycle of St. John. Isabel Bolívar and Julia Chávez told me that they are *sanjuaneras*, but they do not dance to the drums, they only perform *Sanguero* and *Cantos de Sirena*. (39)

The group continued in this fashion for the whole day, until they had been around to all the houses of the town. The participants entered some, but not all, of the houses, depending on whether or not the owner has made a petition to the saint. In the houses they did enter, the celebrants performed the ritual as previously



1. St. John the Baptist visiting the houses of Chuao. 1989



2. Santiago Hernández

Anita Liendo
1989

described. There, promises are complied with, people make petitions for health or for the solution of any problem they had.

The entry of the Saint into a house to receive petitions and thanks for favours granted is not an element of the festivity that has "obvious" Spanish prototype. On the other hand, it is reminiscent of aspects of masquerades performance and of magical rituals in Africa.

Thanks were also given to the Saint for any favours granted, by singing cantos de Sirena. Also they gave special alms, candles or other gifts, such as a dress, or silver or gold little figures.

Through cantos de Sirena, personal affairs on occasions were discussed in public. Sometimes tempers flared up during such a discussions. The first captain intervened, but in an indirect fashion, so that order was maintained. For example, she may change the activity suddenly by permitting the drum to start up again and by doing this, she can re-established social control.

In 1984, because Easter was late, the octave of Corpus Christi fell on the 24th of June. As is usual practice for the 8th day the festival then commemorates Corpus Christi by repeating part of the performance. The devils dedicated themselves during this "little octave" to the reading of edicts; these were somewhat softened in their critical tone, perhaps, due to the presence of St. John. This time the edicts consisted mainly of love poems dedicated to the young girls, thus the reading of edicts occurred without any protest. On this occasion, the Corpus Christi devils were also planning to steal St. John, and were prowling around the houses where there was dancing to the drums trying to figure out how to achieve their intentions. The women members of the Society, and Néstor were paying close attention to the movements of the devils. As a result they were unable to steal the image. However at the festival of St Peter they managed to do so.(39)

After visiting the entire town collecting alms, the women left St. John in the house where they counted the money. A brief rest period was due, and many people headed for the river to bathe and refresh themselves from the intense heat, as part of the routine of every day life. They met in the late afternoon in Berta's house. Finally, around 6.30 p.m. Berta, the first captain, announced that year's total collection had come to 1,900 bolívares. The sum was much less than the 4,000 bolívares obtained the previous year. This

difference reflected recent changes for the worse in the Venezuelan economy. Its effect on the money supply were felt most profoundly by the poorest classes.

Afterwards, they returned to the saint's house, Néstor placed St. John on his altar. During the rest of the day, the performance of *Golpes* continued from one house to another.

Economic factors

People's concern with monetary problems, was outlined by María Tecla when she said : "They are too concerned with the triumph of humanity." This rather enigmatic statement is apparently much used in Chuao and is interpreted as a criticism of people who allow themselves to be led by material and monetary interests. María Tecla, older than the rest of the women, has lived through many periods of much greater difficulty than the present time and remembers growing up in poverty.

Augusta, also a sanjuanera, singer and a good dancer as well said once : "It is a custom to promenade Saint John to Choroni, Cepe and Chuao beaches, after St. Peter day. This is done because it is believed that in this form he blesses the land and sea so people will have their wallets full of money the whole year, because of the good crops. This promenade has always been made. Last year it could not be performed because the *sanjuaneras* from Puerto La Cruz were in Chuao visiting us. (1985)

Augusta and María Tecla walking together to the field, said, as they arrived at the bank of the river, where a very big and ancient *jabillo* tree is growing, "In the past, St. John was taken to this bank of the river, we don't know why they don't do it now. But we can tell you that it was a pleasure to see the procession of St. John, because this place was full of butterflies, and when St. John arrived here, accompanied with the beat of the *caja* and the *Sangueos*, all the butterflies danced in the air. It was really nice, to see the blue sky, the river and St. John surrounded by multicoloured butterflies. We called them, St. John's butterflies. But we don't see such beautiful butterflies here any more . "(1989)

The 25th or the 26th June

The celebration of Juana Manuela

Juana Manuela is thought to be St. John the Baptist mistress. There are many stories about her relationship with St. John the Baptist and finally her 'husband'. Her image is a hairless doll. Her festival appears to be unique to the Chuao community. (Plate 68,p351)

"Juana Manuela was San John's mistress, until the day St. John left her because she was ugly... She was living with St. John without being baptized. He left her in the lurch. But Juana Manuela is very fond of love-making, so she found a new lover Chobendo (a male doll). We, the *sanjuaneras* decided to marry Juana Manuela to Chobendo. We made a feast, but first we baptised her, and then in her wedding dress, we married her to Chobendo. She was the wife of St. John the Baptist, but she married Chobendo, who was her second husband. Young men from Chuao, used to carry Chobendo in procession, asking for money to drink and to eat fish stews, but when nobody in the town, gave more money to Chobendo they stoned him to death. They destroyed the doll, and Juana Manuela was left a widow. Thus, Juana Manuela says that she doesn't fall in love any more, because she had no luck with St. John the Baptist, and now, Chobendo was killed. And that is why she will never marry again. Juana Manuela is childless. Now St. John the Baptist has made his peace with Juana Manuela. "That means that again they are together." (Anita Liendo, 1980)

On the afternoon of June 25th or 26th, the women of the Society, by now recovered from the previous day, commence the procession of Juana Manuela, an old hairless doll inherited from relatives by Anita Liendo. "my grand father was the owner of Juana Manuela, my father, Camilo Borges, inherited her. When he died, one of my aunts took care of Juana Manuela. Later she was in different hands, and now I recovered her and she is under my care." (Anita Liendo, 1980).

According to Jose Rivas: "Juana Manuela was brought to Chuao by Ignacio Hermoso, Anita's grandfather" (1980), and Maritza Tagliafierro: "Ignacio Hermoso, was a medicine man. He was killed by a serpent's bite that somebody put in his way. Unfortunately this



1. Juana Manuela
and Anita Liendo
1980.



2. The mistress of
St John
the Baptist

day he did not have with him the special medicine he knew against it. (1985)(40)

According to Berta Aché: "This is an ancient feast, and we continue to preserve the tradition. Juana Manuela collects alms for Saint John the BaptiSt. Juana Manuela, in the past, was carried in procession by Camilo Borges, who was the owner, inherited from Ignacio Hermoso. Marcolina Liendo, (one of Camilo daughters) had the doll, but she was afraid of her. She neither prepared the oil bath for her, (i.e. re- painted her), nor took her out, in the end she threw her away, in the river. So, Cándida rescued Juana Manuela and started to celebrate the feast as before. Juana Manuela has stories, but I am new, in some way and I didn't know any story. Cándida inherited the task of going out with Juana Manuela. I passed it to Anita Liendo, because she is one of the owner's daughters. She takes care of Juana Manuela and I accompany her, but I am not the leader in that feast, I was still very tired because of the St. John festivity. I don't know when and why this feast started to be celebrated." (1989)

Last June, Anita showed Juana Manuela and laughing said: "Juana Manuela is now much better, thus she has got some money and can buy new dresses, and luxury pants." (1989)

The image of Juana Manuela

The image of the mistress of St. John is made of wood, its hair is ragged and uncombed. The face is garishly painted and the vagina marked with a deep line. The women dress her in a sexually provocatively way in a multicoloured dress made of lace and shiny fabric. (Plate 68,2, p351)

The woman who carries Juana Manuela paints her face clumsily, accentuating the red of the lips and cheeks. It is intended to look ugly. As to the history of this part of the feast women only said that it was an ancient custom, and they did what they had learnt from the older generation.

Juana Manuela's day

In the procession began in the late afternoon of the 25th June, in front of Juana Manuela goes a young boy dressed as a clown. Juana Manuela is carried around the town on the head of a woman. In this case, it was Anita Liendo who moved to the rhythm of a drum made of two pieces of cardboard beaten together to produce a sound as tacatacaca, tacatacaca. Anita Liendo identified the rhythm as an

Indian one, giving no explanation. The verses sung by the *sanjuaneras* to carry out Juana Manuela were:

A batiló, a batiló, dodge this batilón

Juana Manuela is good for nothing

look at the face at this bitch

A batiló, a batiló, dodge this batilón."

(Anita Liendo, 1980). (The words batiló, batilón have no meaning in Spanish)

To ask for alms, the refrain sung to Juana Manuela is a parodic subversion of the chant used when asking for alms for St. John. The saint's chant, "Praised be the Blessed Sacrament" (in Spanish, "Alabado sea el Santísimo") is now transformed into "Praised be the Santiago", a clever pun on the last word of the formal chant of St. John, using "Santiago", the common Spanish name for James. For it happens that in her promenade, Juana Manuela is asking for alms, for money for her man, St. John the Baptist.

"Praised be the Santiago

the roosters' toothpuller

give Juana Manuela her alms

because she flies higher than a kite. "

As the celebration progresses, the women lower the doll's lace panties to display her genitalia. The songs for Juana Manuela are sexual in nature and they are often rather explicit:

"Since she has it like a vein (sexual allusion)

Juana Manuela will eat no more yucca

because her pubic hair will fall off

Juana Manuela does not eat "topocho" (a variety of banana)

because the hairs of her biscuit fall off. (sexual allusion)

Oh, Juana Manuela does not eat "topocho"

Oh, my black man ("mi negro", a term of endearment)

because the hairs of her biscuit will fall off.

(Maritza Tagliaferro, 1985)

When the procession entered the house of the *sanjuaneras*, Ramón Hernández, Berta Ache's son, one of the best drummers in Chuao, was in charge of beating the *caja* and people danced *Golpes*, as in St. John's day.

And Marcolina said: "With Juana Manuela, one has to go running, with Juana Manuela, everybody is dancing around." It is a rowdy, noisy event. All the women enjoy themselves, including María

Tecla, as they sing a series of rather lewd songs and jostle and push one another when they enter the different houses. Things appear to be out of control; the mood is wild, and apparently disordered, particularly after the relative order of the St. John festival. María Tecla said: "The *sanjuaneras* take out Juana Manuela, we ask for money, and later on we make a sancocho . (1989)

Not all the women participated in the Juana Manuela celebration of 1984. The older and more lively members of Chuao's female community did participate. Berta also said: "the old women from Chuao like to celebrate Juana Manuela because this festivity comes from the ancient times."

The 28th and 29th June **The festival of Saint Peter.**

The St. John cycle continued, on June 28 and 29 with the festivity of St. Peter. Its structure was similar to that of St. John, with a *Velorio* on the eve and a celebration the next day. Homage to St. Peter was rendered using the image of St. John.

When I asked Berta Aché, why they used the image of Saint John the Baptist, she said : "Very simple, because we haven't got any money to buy an image of Saint Peter, so we use St. John 's image (1988). (The image of St John is called by other *sanjuaneras* John-Peter). The musical forms are the same as for St. John the Baptist, although some of the songs are different. On this occasion the relation between St. Peter and St. John is established in the following *Sanguero*, which is repeated every year:

I used to have such a ball
I used to have such a ball
ay la ra la ra la ra
to have such a ball
with the watchmen,
with the watchmen
Who my chains had,
who my chains had,
when Christ came into the world,
when Christ came into the world,
he brought a beautiful poppy,
he brought a beautiful poppy,

he brought a Saint with two faces,
he brought a Saint with two faces
He spoke only one language,
he spoke only one language
when Christ came into the world
nobody was able to see him,
only Saint Anna could see him
She went in and talked to him
she went in and talked to him,
St.Peter cried a hundred years
until he realized,until he realized,
when I will realize,
I will cry one hundred
and ninety years,
Since St. Peter was bald,
he asked St. John for some hair
and St. John answered him
Pedro leave your hair
because I'm not a hairdresser
Ay! in the centre of the church
I saw two men walking around,
they were Christ and St. John
who have been baptizing each other,
St. Michael punished my soul
and Christ received my soul
when I arrived to the doors of heaven
Christ opened them for me,
Christ opened there to me. (1984)

According to Cándida: "St. John had his woman and he came down on the first of June; St. Peter didn't like the revelry, he's not one to carouse, he is a serious man, he doesn't like to drink. All St. Peter does is cry, that is why the days of St. Peter are so wet, he cries a lot because he quarrelled with St. John. Because St. John has his curls, and he doesn't, and St. Peter has a hairless head. Then St. Peter, since he was bald, asked St. John for some hair, and St. John answered, 'Forget about any hair, Peter, because I am not a hairdresser.' So, there they were, then St. John on the first of June told him, well my friend, since you are not going to go, then he

(John) told him (Peter) to stay with his (John's) woman and take care of her, he told him to take care of her until he (John) returned. So he (John) came down first, don't you know that he got drunk, he got so, so drunk that he came and fell asleep in Saint Mary's arms. Then when he remembered, his day was already over, he didn't even enjoy his own saint's day, don't you see, he was asleep, he falls asleep the day before. Then, St. Peter likes St. John's woman, St. Peter took her, he got very close (made love) to St. John's woman. When St. John went back he found Peter in his place and then Cándida sang these *Sangueo* :

"If Saint John knew
which was his holy day
the world would end
with music and joy.

Saint John fell asleep
in Mary's arms
and when he woke up
the day had already passed.

St. John had his woman
St. Peter took her from him
since there's no government in heaven,
we're going to overthrow God..."(1984)

On the 29th June, St. Peter's day, as on St. John's day, the *sanjuaneras* ask for alms. Most of the songs were addressed to St. John- Peter and they made further petitions . Everyone expected that it would rain. This was a sign of good luck and the Chuao women link the rain storm to the figure of St. Peter, saying that he is a saint who cries a lot.

The afternoon celebration is centred on the procession of St. Peter's donkey, a real animal in this case. "Saint Peter's donkey belongs to Marcos Hernández (a member of the community and Maritza Tagliafierro's husband) and we put cans, sugar canes, a lot of flowers on its head and baskets with bananas, yams, plantains and other vegetables. The donkey is covered, the only part left uncovered is its face. A boy, all papered over like a clown, mounts it

and then all the women and the children go behind the donkey, whipping it. The little boy that goes on the donkey has to go well tied down, because if he isn't, that donkey is going to throw him, and then, all the time that the donkey is running, the food is falling off, and the little kids go behind, picking it up. Saint Peter's donkey comes from a long time ago, from the old people; you promenade that donkey on the afternoon of the 29th. Anita Liendo said: "In the morning we are gathering food for that donkey, and in the middle we put a boy well tied down", and then, Anita sings:

'Saint Peter had a donkey
that was the young ladies' despair,
and when a young lady moved,
then so that she would not reach heaven,
as a virgin,
so the donkey would get close to her
and make her that favour,
that is why,
since Saint Peter had a donkey,
that is St. Peter's donkey.'

When St. Peter's donkey is mentioned, everyone laughs mischievously, because of the sexual allusion of the songs dedicated to the young girls of the town.

"A boy goes in front holding the reins of the donkey, and we (the *sanjuaneras*) go, behind giving that donkey the whip, and the one who is in the front runs desperately...But all this is done by us women, the men go drinking ."(Anita Liendo, 1980).

"This year on St Peter's day, they took away the donkey as every year, but this time they put Soledad, (Maritza and Marcos's daughter) on it, because the other children were afraid. But she was quite happy because she likes the donkey, which belongs to her father. But when people whipped the poor donkey, she fell off very quickly. María Tecla and Augusta had a lot of fun, because they took care of this part of the festivity, dressing the children as Indians, who were going dancing and singing, and the donkey was following them."(Berta,1980)

When this event finished the *sanjuaneras* continued to dance *Golpes* into the night.

The 15th and 16th July.

The Festival of the Virgin of the Mount Carmel.

This is the final stage of the cycle of St. John. Edita González and Maritza Tagliafierro, who have inherited the tradition of the *Velorio* to the Virgin of Mount Carmel began preparations on the afternoon of 15th of July. When their mother, a renowned sanjuanera and noted reveller, was alive, the festivity had always been performed in her house. This has since fallen into decay, although the *Velorio* was held on the site where the house used to be.

Edita and Maritza erects the altar there, and prepared the place for the night's singing. The altar is laid out similar to that on St. John's, only less luxuriously. First they put palm fronds around the site, to simulate the lateral walls, then Maritza covered the wall behind the altar with white sheets, on which flowers were pinned. In the middle of the altar, which was made of a table covered with a white cloth, she placed the wooden image of Mount Carmel. She then decorated a small wooden cross with white paper and placed it on the altar, to one side of the statue of the Virgin. Afterwards many white candles and flowers were placed on the table. Long benches were taken from the church and placed in the large room so that people could sit facing the altar.

Neither Maritza nor Edita have more information about the origin of the statue, only that they always remember this image in their mother's house.

At eight in the evening, María Tecla began the prayers and said the rosary. Not many people were present, only a few children, seated on the benches, prayed with María Tecla and waited for the music. At around 10 p.m., Jesús Franco rung the church bells, and the women of the St. John Society went to the saint's house to fetch him. Singing and performing *Sangueos*, they took the Saint to every part of town, just as on St. John's day, arriving finally at the site where the *Velorio* to the Virgin of Mount Carmel was being held.

St. John the Baptist thus visited and paid homage to the Mother of God, and then returned to his house. At the *Velorio*, at approximately 11 p.m. the drums begin to sound, and Natalia, one of the best *fulía* singers began her performance; (see *Velorio* of the devil, p) other women followed her, among them La Vieja (nickname) another *fulía* singer. Of the men who were present and singing, there

was Claudio Franco, who had been second captain of the devils and one of the principal singers of the Holy Week processions, and Silvestre, composer of Décimas and a herbalist.

The *Velorio* ended at nine the following morning. Hot chocolate and rum made alternate rounds during the night in order to keep up the participants' spirits.

In the house of St. John, another *Velorio* was also being celebrated. There, by means of *Cantos de Sirena* the women of the Society and some of the menfolk were airing the year's problems. The women sang together and the men would oppose them. On one side were Néstor, Pío, Ramón, and Vicente; on the other, Berta, Sabina, Brígida, Eddy, and Yolanda. Towards the end, Natalia, who had been at the *Velorio* of the Virgin of Mount Carmel joined the group of women to present her points of view. The controversy centred around what the St. John Society did with the money it had collected. From there, the verses went on to treat the needs of the community; in the end, positions and misunderstandings were made clear, and both the men and women had expressed to their satisfaction, their feelings and thoughts on these politically and socially sensitive matters. As the day dawned around 5 a.m. those from St. John's house went to say good morning to St. John (although the saint was in his house) by singing the Ave María at the church door. Then they began visiting houses; the townspeople opened their doors to them and the *golpes* continued.

Meanwhile, the *Velorio* to the Virgin of Mount Carmel continued with the singing of *fulías*. The Musicians were Machaguita, Domingo, Ramón, and Claudio. The principal *fulía* singers were Natalia, Emperatriz, Lucía, Aquilina, La Vieja, and others. Among the *décima* singers were Juan Damasio, Silvestre and Pancho Castillo. As mentioned before, during the *Velorios* in Chuao, with exception of St. John the Baptist, neither dancing nor drum playing are permitted. In the *Velorio* to the Virgin of the Mount Carmel *Fulías* 'a lo divino and a lo profano' (sacred and profane) were performed dedicated to the Virgin. Three examples are given:

María Tecla sang a *fulía* 'a lo divino': Celestial Chant

Listen the wisdom of the soul, listen the wisdom of the soul (choir)

Christ is present

He lights the understanding, boy

he lights the understanding of the human race
Listen Holy Cross, how bigger is your value
Listen Holy Cross how bigger is your value
how bigger is your value
that in your divine arms, in your divine arms
was kept the Lord
Tell me what can I do to approach the Lord
To approach the Lord
the repentance before the confession
before the confession
I'm looking for Jesuschrist
I'm looking for Jesuschrist
to give me his love
to give me his love
and forgive my sins, and forgive my sins
in the holy communion
in the holy communion
It is in the field
where the singer birds were born
because it is in the field
the singer birds hatch
the singer birds
Listen Carmen Elena
after this last little verse
I'm going to be silent
I'm going to be silent
because now I cannot sing as I sang before. (1985)

The Virgin of Mount Carmel

(a fulia sang by Yolanda Almenar (Nené) and Eddy
Liendo :

She doesn't want to be a countess (choir)
Mauricia, The Virgin of Mount Carmel says
the Virgin of Mount Carmel says
that she doesn't want to be a countess
the Virgin of Mount Carmel says to Yolanda
that she doesn't want to be a countess
she wants to be a captain
to be a beautiful araguanesa (From Aragua State)

Araguanesa she wants to be a captain
she wants to be a captain and
also a beautiful araguanesa. (1984)

This dove I loved (other *fulia*)

**This little dove I loved, this little dove I loved, this I loved, I loved, farewell
little dove, it flew away, farewell little dove, which flew away (Choir)**

Good evening to everybody I just arrived,

I just arrived, what will Natalia say?

What will Natalia say?

Soon the sunrise, soon, the sunrise

my mother taught me to worship God

my mother taught me to worship God

my mother taught me, to worship Lord God

almighty God Father, to worship Lord God

almighty God Father

The little dove, which went away

this little dove which went away

which went away, Virgin of Mount Carmel,

I will not forget you, Virgin of Mount Carmel

I will not forget you/

I don't water flowers when I want to leave

I don't water flowers when I want to leave

when I want to leave,

I have very fine verses to say goodbye

I have very fine verses to say goodbye/

This little dove, which now sings

which now sings, which now sings

is Our Patron Saint the Immaculate

is our Patron Saint the Immaculate

This little dove, which sang on the beach

which sang on the beach

which sang on the beach

was the dove of the Candelaria

was the dove of the Candelaria

Listen Aquilina, my loved Aquilina

my loved Aquilina

listen Carmelita is engaged

Carmelita is engaged
This little dove, which comes from Chuao
This dove which comes from Chuao
which comes from Chuao
we have to sing to her with joy,
when we seed cocoa, when we seed cocoa
we have to sing to her with joy when we seed cocoa
This little dove, this little dove that we sing here,
that we sing here, this little dove is from Choroní
this little dove is from Choroní
This morning where was she? where was she?
when the day arrived she flew away
when the day arrived she flew away
I say farewell because I'm going
because I'm going, I'm going with pain
My loved Edita I'm going with pain
This little cocoa, which went away from Chuao
this little cocoa which went away from Chuao
how did you know who seeded it,
how do you know who seeded it. (Natalia, 1985)

The women of the St. John Society, the *sanjuaneras*, began their journey through the town at nine in the morning, asking for alms for St. John. First they carried Saint John again to the *Velorio* shrine of the Virgin of Mount Carmel to visit her. They stayed there very briefly, greeting the Virgin. Then they followed the same route and performed in the same way as on June 24th. They took St. John from his house to the church around 9.30 a.m. The entire Chuao community had by now gathered in the churchyard.

Néstor, the horse of St. John the Baptist, with the image on the table on his head performed in the usual manner, with a lot of energy. Finally St. John returned to this niche in the church thereby bringing his festival cycle to an end.

Favours and punishment of Saint John the Baptist
(Los milagros de San Juan)

The festival provides the opportunity for people to address petitions to St. John the Baptist, as has already been noted. The success of the Saint in granting these favours contributes to, at least, in part, his continuing relevance to the people of Chuao.

According to María Borges:

"He has performed many miracles...he is very miraculous, St. John the Baptist, and when you, for example, ask for his help when you are sick, that you desire something, then you say: 'Oh, St. John the Baptist, I want you to give me health,' and you see the improvement that his miracle has to grant you. If you get sick and you offer him a little doll and you give it to him, if you have a headache, you give him a little head [which represents the part of your body you were asking for cure] and in this way he is very miraculous. Very many people have been cured through him, that is why he has such a big society. That is why almost all of Chuao women are in his society."(1985)

"I can say to St. John the Baptist, granted me this, and it's easy for me, I know that St. John granted me. If a candle is what it takes, then I will light his candle for him, if the favour requires praying an Our Father, then I will pray his Our Father for him, but he is such a miraculous saint, I am telling you, yes sir, Saint John the Baptist, yes...This saint belongs to the people, he is respected, well, because he is a saint in the church, he is baptised and has to be respected, that is why he is kept in the church and he is taken out to collect his alms, they carry him up-street, down-street, to the rhythm of the *Sanguero*. If you want him, you ask for him, and they will stop him for a while here or in your home, you offer rum, this and the other, and they carry out their saint again, collecting his alms, yes sir, it's just the way I'm telling you"(1980)

"I have a lot of faith in St. John since I was very young, and it happened that my son, the little black one, that drunkard that I have around here somewhere, he was run over by a car. He was fourteen years old, and everyone who saw him in the hospital, would only shake his head, that boy did not breathe, only through a little side of his mouth did that one breathe at all. Then a policeman there from

the hospital said, 'you are the boy's father' and then he added 'what you have to do is get ready, because that black one has no life.' Oh, lady, imagine, I saw my son dead, so I dedicated an appeal to Saint John the Baptist, I saw him in dreams. 'Oh', I told him, 'Saint John the Baptist, my son so young, he was fourteen, save him.' And then I went back in the afternoon, they told me, 'lady, he has a broken leg, but they already put in a splint, in his right leg, because it was hurting him too much. I tell you, it is a miracle that Saint John the Baptist made for me, a miracle. Then I had him in the hospital for two months, then they gave him to me. Oh, when I went, I took his little clothes. Oh, Saint John the Baptist, my God, I stuck to Saint John the Baptist and then the same day they gave him to me, I came here to the beach. Simón Ladera, may he rest in peace, made him some crutches, it's true, one of his little feet was left crooked, because it hurt him to walk on the sand, so he wouldn't put his weight on it the right way.'(Cándida 1984)

"My son said to him: 'Oh, St. John the Baptist, get me out of this safely,' because he was very sick, the doctor told him. Then I sent word to María Tecla to light this big candle for me. And then the boy got up. Saint John is a very miraculous saint."(Juana Chema, 1980)

Anita Liendo said:

"I saw Saint John the Baptist. Only that once I was very sick in a hospital, I asked him to save me and give me health. I had got an illness, they took me to the hospital, and they sent me over here because there was no cure for me. Then I asked him in the midst of my illness, when I had fever and I asked Saint John the Baptist to give me my health. Then I fell asleep and then in the dream I see myself already coming out of the hospital and then I found a doctor and a nurse who told me, 'Don't worry, because you are going to get well' and then I saw what it was I had. 'This woman can be cured, let's go immediately, and take her out of here and give her an enema. Then they give me a an injection every minute and every minute...I have the faith that it was Saint John the Baptist and the Immaculate Conception. That is why I have my faith in him all my life I have had it since that grave illness, because for me, it was he who came into my mind...' (1980)

Maritza Tagliafierro narrated:

"Once the police took a man from Chuao to jail and they weren't going to let him go because the case was very serious, the crime he had committed was bad. And then [when he was there, this little man came to him [referring to Saint John] and the prisoner asked him who he was. I am your lawyer. No, but I don't have money to pay that lawyer...then he told him: 'I am your lawyer and one hour after I leave here you will leave free' Then the little man left. And he began to meditate, ¿Who could it be? Oh, no, this is Saint John the Baptist. Then the little man came and spoke to the policemen. And then the policemen told him: 'You're free.' Who has released me from prison? They told him: 'Your lawyer.' They let him go and he came back to Chuao and came to tell everyone that Saint John the Baptist had got him out of jail." (1980)

St. John can also, through his behaviour, announce the coming of some event, or punish wrong doing. In the first case, Natalia Ladera said, as she observed St. John's image in 1984:

"From the moment they took Saint John to the altar, he was very heavy as he didn't want to go in. I thought : "Something is going to happen among us, he himself had better give us a hand, to shelter and favour us. Already the captain, Juan Chávez, came out with asphyxia, he could hardly talk...his family took him to Choroní this morning..." In truth, at least on that occasion, nothing special occurred that could have been related to the saint's attitude. Nevertheless, something had already happened in the morning, and not to just anybody but to the captain of St. John. His absence during the festivity was viewed with fear. (The illness of a captain could be interpreted as a bad sign for the community, because they think that the leaders of the festivity have a protection at this time).

Another time, María Tecla said: "Saint John is not a reveller, we are. My mother told me a story. It was that people came from Choroní, and at that time the cocoa was so abundant that it occupied the whole churchyard, from the beginning of the square close to the church door. The administrator decided not to give permission to Saint John the Baptist of Choroní to enter, so that he could not visit the other altar of the Saint John from here. That was in ninety-two [1892], then there was a big flooding of the river, the cocoa was being swept out of the centre of the churchyard, they caught it in baskets and it was going into the street with the flood. The cocoa

harvest from the churchyard was loSt. It was a punishment for not permitting the meeting of the two saints. (1979)

And she adds: "A civil chief [government officer] named Silva came, who did not let the *Velorio* of St. John come out on the eve, as usual, from the church to his house. Then on Saint Peter's day, and he did not want him taken out on the feast of the Virgin of the Mount Carmel. Well, all right, later he was taken away, tied up, from here up to Turmero. That gentleman is already dead." (The Saint punished him for not permitting the celebration). (1979)

She tells another story: "Once a civil guard from Choroní, Pedroza invited us to go to Playa Grande beach with the Saint. We went there, and on the beach he took the Saint John's table and touched it with his bottom to make fun. We were waiting on the boat to castigate him, but he didn't come back, it seemed to me that he imagined we could have punished him. I have not seen him for many years, and one day I was in Turmero when I saw him crossing the square. He couldn't walk normally, he couldn't raise his head up, and each footstep he took his arm touched his bottom. I think it was a punishment of St John for his lack of respect." (1989)

María Tecla continued: "Once, in General Castro's time, (President of Venezuela, 1899-1908) (you know that was a time of many revolutions), Damiana was going with her Saint John to La Toma and, when she arrived, the path was closed by soldiers. In a moment she was alone with St. John in the middle of the street. St John was dressed only with ribbons, then she took Saint John into the Felipita Liendo's house, (nowadays Evarista Liendo's house), and she was going in but he didn't want to enter so, she came out. On the way St. John lost one foot, she was afraid and told him "ok. you want to stay out, I leave you to be killed by the soldiers. But when they came and saw the Saint they walked around him and Damiana, afterwards all of them laid down to render homage to the Saint" (1989).

It is worth explaining that in the context of Chuao the word "miracles" is applied to either benefits or punishment. They also call the votive offerings, miracles, in response to favours granted, such as: golden, silver or metallic little hands, dresses, and ribbons. They buy all of these things, except the dresses. Nobody makes them in Chuao. In the majority of cases the votive offerings are little hands.

These can be related to the common Venezuelan custom that when a child is born, relatives or friends, especially god fathers and mothers, give the baby a little hand made of *azabache*, (jet) to protect him from the evil's eye. So in Chuao it is quite understandable that the offering are often these hands because St. John the Baptist is intimately linked to birth and baptism.

The ending of the 1984 celebration

The 1984 celebration ended in a rather special manner; just before taking the truck to the beach, in order to return to Caracas, the writer said good-bye to Cándida Bacalao, and she sang the following song:

"With the deepest stone that the sea has in its centre
Oh, in its centre, oh, that the sea has in its centre, I have to go,
Carmen, oh, to cry my sadness, ah
My sadness and to the sea that you are going and to the sea I am going
with you, oh, since I love you so much, look, and I am determined to do
everything
Oh I love you more than my eyes, I love you, but I love my eyes more
because they were the ones who saw you, ah
Oh, who saw you, I wish I were a painter, I wish I were a painter, oh,
in my hand picture you,
Oh, picture you in my hand, picture you, oh when you were absent, oh,
open my hand and look at you,
Oh, look at you, I give you my blessing, I give you my blessing, oh, I
give you my blessing, oh mother I am on my way
Oh on your way, oh Carmen who goes on her way, may the mother of God
go with you, oh, daughter of the divine Word
Her mother, oh, let her tell her mother, oh, let her tell her mother, oh
that I want her to tell her mother for me
For me, oh, that I want to tell her that I do not know her, but I hear her
named
Oh, named, but I hear her named, that I want to tell her
Oh, if she has me in her memory as she promised me she would, ah."

During the research made for this thesis Cándida confided that she was passing on "her knowledge" in the machine, and that this made her happy. She said that now she could go, because, beside,

she had her white dress ready, so that she could be buried wearing it. But first she wanted them to sing "*Sangueos*" for her and for them to dance to the drum on the way to the cemetery. Beside, she said, in Chuao they ring the church bells when they take you to be buried, "...and I want them to beat the drum and sing "*Sangueos*" for me like they do for my saint, Saint John the Baptist. I want to have a happy burial. "

At the time, her words did not have that much significance but two months later, she was dead, and they buried her as she had wished, like the good sanjuanera that she had been. The writer visited her the following year, in the silence and peace of her resting place, accompanied by the whispering of the great trees that surround the small cemetery of Chuao, in the midst of the forest, close to the river.

Conclusions

The festival of St. John the Baptist in Chuao originated in colonial times. This festivity had probably been reinvigorated in the time of Damiana Liendo, and reinforced through the leadership of other captains of St. John the Baptist, such as Machu and Juana Liendo in the more recent time, and in the present time under the leadership of Berta Aché.

St. John the Baptist is the one Saint in Chuao, who has two celebrations, one in December and other in June. These two celebrations are different. The first one comprises of a mass, procession and traditional catholic liturgical songs. The second celebration, as already described, is a complex cycle, marked by the interplay of sacred and profane elements in the rhythms, dances and songs.

The celebration of St. John the Baptist is followed by Juana Manuela (the mistress). Afterwards St. Peter festival is followed by the feast of the donkey .

Each of the two festivities, St. John and St. Peter, contain the interplay of sacred and profane elements. In the musical structures of *Sanguero* and *Cantos de Sirena* the Saint watches his people, especially his women, and interplays and dances with them. He is there in his physical presence. On the other hand, when people start to dance to the drum, St. John is hidden, though still very

near, hearing his people having fun around the drum. This presence-absence of the image of St. John creates, around the dance and the songs further ambiguities.

Looking at matters of gender, women are more important in St. John festivity than men. They are the leaders, but at the same time, men compliment them. Without them, the performance is not complete. Again, the boundaries between the roles are not clearly defined, posing another ambiguity in the interplay of sexes.

One verse of the *Cantos de Sirena* records these ambivalences: "St. John the Baptist is the Saint with two faces, but one tongue," which can be interpreted in the context of the whole cycle as the multiple and different values of the festivity, 'the ambiguities,' and at the same time the unity of all of these various elements around the figure of St. John the Baptist.

The feast of St. John the Baptist is a complex ritual. Within it are combined different artistic manifestations, such as music, dance, drama, vestments, images, and many verbal elements, which include poems, songs, myths, legends and stories.

The festivity also offers an opportunity to criticise the way problems are being handled within the community. Moreover, the cycle serves to preserve a tradition while at the same time enabling social changes, to occur. This is possible because of the scope for the incorporation of new elements. The Saint John cycle provides entertainment and serves as a way to liberate sexual energy, for the rituals include many lascivious elements, accompanied by great noise and disorder. These aspects, however, expressed through the different songs and dances to the beat of drums, are not only apparent during the days dedicated to St. John, but can also be witnessed on St. Peter's day, during the procession of Juana Manuela and the Virgin of Mount Carmel, as already discussed.

Within the St. John festivity and cult, personal feelings may be expressed, joys and sorrows are shared, disputes can be aired, and events of the year can be recounted. Moreover, very close bonds of affection and communication are established among the women of the society. The cult to St. John the Baptist invigorates and unites the Chuao people.

Notes

1. JCJ. Metford. **Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend**, p. 144.
2. Julio Caro Baroja, . *Mascaradas y alardes de San Juan* **Revista de Dialectología**, p. 499
3. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo. **Las cien mejores poesías de la lengua castellana**
4. **Ibid**
5. **bid**
6. Lope de Vega. **Obras escogidas**.
7. **Ibid.**
8. Cecilia Fuentes y Daría Hernández. **San Juan Bautista**
9. Julio Caro Baroja. **Op cit.** p. 500
10. **Ibid.**
11. Silvia P. García. *La fiesta de San Juan en la provincia de Formosa*.
12. María Amalia Correa Gefoni. *Manifestacoes coreográficas na religiosidade brasileira*.
13. Veríssimo de Melo. *Creencias y supersticiones de San Juan* .
14. Suardo Antonio. **Diario de Lima**. Tomo II(1629-1634), p.136.
15. Cecilia Fuentes y Daría Hernández. **Op. cit.**

16. *Sanguero*: This word is not registered in ordinary Spanish Dictionaries. In Corominas: **Diccionario Etimológico de la lengua castellana**: appears sanguis: masculin word in Clásical Latin, but in Latin Archaic Authors: sanguen (neutral word), meaning blood.
In Martín Alonso, **Diccionario medieval español** appears sanguar, (XIII Century), meaning santiguar (make the sign of the cross) in Gonzalo de Berceo's work: Santa Oria, 1265.
In the context of the festivity of St. John the Baptist in Chuao, **Sanguero** might be referred to the meaning santiguar but also to sanguen, if we take in consideration oral tradition in which it is said that the dance of the comes from the beheading of St. John the Baptist. So, both terms might be intermingled producing a combination of songs, dances and drums, which defines *Sanguero* in Chuao, or could be also the result of the combination of Spanish and African heritage. Although, it should be more likely the Medioeval Spanish origin of the word.
17. *Cantos de Sirena* are sung to render homage to St. John the Baptist in some towns of the Venezuelan States Yaracuy, Carabobo and Aragua. In these Venezuelan regions were concentrated the majority of slaves in colonial time. The name *Cantos de Sirena* appear in the old romance the Count Niño, in p. 4.
18. *Golpes de Tambor* are heard in the same regions mentioned in note 17.
19. Cecilia Fuentes y Daría Hernández. **Op. cit.**
20. **Obra Pía de Chuao**, p. 216
21. **Ibid**, p. 273
22. **Ibid**, p. 410.
23. Cayetana Veloz, María Tecla Herrera, Isabel Bolívar, María Borges, Cándida Bacalao, Marcolina Liendo, Berta Aché, José Rivas, Pulido Ladera and others.
24. In 1979, Cayetana Veloz was 105 years old, she would be 7 years old when she met Damiana, (1881) who probably was around 100 years old, it could be said that she arrived in Chuao when she was 15 or 20 years old, 1796 or 1801. Comparing it with the information obtained from St. John the Baptist's

brotherhood of the church of St. Maurice, Caracas, and thinking of the links between members of that confraternity and Chuao, it is possible to say that due to the decadence of St. John celebration in Caracas (around 1797-1808), Damiana who had belong to the Liendo family, (and probably had relatives in Chuao) decided to translate an image of St. John the Baptist to Chuao, in which the celebration was already held, and she strengthened the festivity as is confirmed by oral tradition. Or She could be translated there by the family Liendo from La Vega, Caracas, (another plantation belonged to Catalina Mexía de Liendo), because in her will, disposition N° she said that the slaves she had in La Vega can be translate to Chuao, if the cocoa plantation needed them. That disposition, again reaffirms the communication established between the capital and Chuao, during colonial time.

25. The names of the first captains people remember are: Damiana Liendo, Francisca Planchez, Machu Chávez, Juana Liendo, Marcolina Liendo, (Camilo Borges' daughter), Berta Aché. As second captain, they only talk about Cándida Bacalao, and as male captains, Simón Franco (Jesús Franco's grand father, who was captain at the time of Machu Chávez); Vicente Mijares, (Cándida's husband); (Juan Chávez, Cándida's husband); who was after Charli Hernández, but because of his illness he resigned this position, and then the society chose Santiago Hernández.

In relation to the captains Berta said: "After Candida's death we haven't elected any second captain. Every year the women of the society said: We have to choose a second one, but at the end we didn't. I think why have another captain? . Santiago, the first captain goes with me all the time, he has to go to protect us from quarrels, or other kinds of problem. For example, this year we went out without candles, people came to trouble me and I said to everybody: one moment, here is the Captain to represent me. I cannot do everything. But Chavez who was captain said Berta you are right. You know Carmen, this is hard work, It is a heavy load to prepare and control the whole festivity, I try to do my best but I cannot take care of all details. That problem happened on the 16th of July, the problem was that we hadn't got the candles, but that task is the obligation of the Captain: the fireworks, the candles, and taking care of the women. This year Iginio took care of the fireworks, he acted as another captain. We bought this year eighteen dozen fireworks, and spent around Bs. 2.000, which was a bargain taking into consideration the quantity."

26. In August 1989 I went to Berta's house in Maracay. People were watching T.V. It was eight o'clock when I arrived : Iginio, her husband, Ramón, Pio and one of the two girls were there. Berta and Iginio have four children. They belong to one of the few married couples of Chuao. They have this house in Maracay because Iginio used to work there, and could obtain a cheap mortgage from the government to buy the house. Now he is retired, so Berta and he spend two days in Maracay looking after the girls and the rest of the week they stay in Chuao. There, they also have a house, which they are improving by building a toilet and more rooms. They are good workers. In Chuao Iginio rents an old truck which belongs to Sebastian Murillo and makes some money transporting people from the beach to the town and viceversa. Berta sells icecream made at home and, during the time of festivities, except St. John, she prepares and sells different kinds of appropriate food. They are more commercially minded than other people of Chuao, and sometimes others resent this. For example, Iginio won't take anybody to town or to beach without payment, and some people of Chuao don't understand that they have to pay. They are inhabitants of Chuao and have a right to go there. However, it is very clear to Iginio, he says to them 'if you don't pay you don't go in the truck, go by foot.' Women also say that the food Berta sells is very expensive. On the other hand they are respected because Iginio belongs to one of the important families, of Chuao, he is Néstor's uncle and Berta came from "El Paraíso." She is Jesus Franco's cousin. Probably, they have a different outlook on life because they have been living in a city for many years, and this makes the difference .

*Berta talked in Maracay 1989 about different things in relation to St. John. Part of her talk has already been included in the description of the festivity of St. John. "As captain I am doing well, Carmen Elena. When they gave me the leadership of the Society of St. John, twelve years ago they had only 1,000 Bs, now I have collected 20,000. We are starting to rebuild the house of St. John and we will make some changes inside, such as knocking down the wall which divides the corridor and the living room. This will extend the latter, in which the altar is placed. We are also planning to have a big window for good ventilation. The former house was made of bahareque (a type of mud). We are changing it into blocks. This year I will begin, if God wills, so, that when I die people of Chuao will say, that house was made by the dead Berta, who was first captain of St. John. This year, as you remember, we went to Choroni on the 25th of June, we sang and danced in the church. People treated us in a marvellous way. Afterwards the priest called us, he wanted us to do the same dances and songs at the afternoon Mass. So, we went there, and at the end we

were so tired that we felt dead. But it was very nice and profitable because we collected Bs 5,000 for St. John."

Berta has a beautiful voice, and it would appear that she is one of the best singers of Chuao. So, she said: "I do not know how to read or to write, all the verses I have to invent them in my head. I always said to my sons, please listen to me. You must study, to learn, because it is very sad, when you don't' because everybody deceives you. When I was a child I lived in the field. I had to work there, cut the scrub with the machete to prepare the land. There was a little school in town, but I couldn't go there. When I was sixteen my father moved into Chuao, and then I lived here until I married. Later, you know I was living between Maracay and Chuao, but, now, my real desire is to live in Chuao for the rest of my life. I am now 52 years old, my family have grown up, they are young men and women and they don't' need me as before, I did the best I could for them; now I would like to live peacefully in Chuao."

27. According to Isabel Bolívar: "St. John is watched three times; he is outside the church from June 23 until July 16. "What does that mean, watching ? it was asked "Well, on his altar, outside the church, where they take him to be watched. And that house where Saint John is watched, has been made for a long time, it has a main altar, baptised by the Father. In order to take him to that main altar to watch him, first there was a wedding. At that time the church was in a bad way and a niece of mine was married there in that chapel [the Saint's house] ". (Isabel did not know the date in which this happened but it must be in recent times, since the reforms of the church made by Presidente Leoni (1965-70). María Borges confirmed the accuracy of Isabel's story about her niece's wedding ceremony being held at the house, rather than in the church, so that the saint could be watched there afterwards, María Borges affirms: "That is true, well, there shouldn't be any people in the house. The house belonged to a bachelor, but since everything in that place is old, it's an old place, that doesn't mean anything more, because that house is baptised."(1979).

28. *Caja* (already described in the Corpus festivity). Fernando Ortiz in **Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el Folklore de Cuba** said that in Cuba the Congos danced Yuka, this music was played with three *tímbres*, *membráfonos*: *la caja*, *la mula y el cachimbo*. The *cajero* (the man who beats the *caja*) is the leader of the musicians in the Congo's dances in Cuba. (p.394,426)

29. *Cumaco* : a drum with one membrane, attached with nails to the wooden drum body; both the membrane and the body of the drum are struck. It is placed on the ground and may be played by various drummers simultaneously, who sit on it. The membrane is played with the hands, while the body of the drum is topped with sticks.
30. Modernism attempted to break out of biological and social limitations and to create awareness through new uses of language. Poets took the creation of a new vocabulary and new forms seriously. For the first time in Latin America poets tended to place literary activity higher in the hierarchy of values than political activities. The creator and most important poet of this movement was the nicaraguense Rubén Darío. He started the new poetry with *Azul*, a poem published in 1898.
31. In the morning of the 23 of June, only *socias* participate in the festivity, some of them, who have little children cannot come because they prepare food, fetch the children, so they prefer to do the domestic work during the day to be free in the evening and fully participate in the celebration. It can be said that this morning ritual prepares the ambience, the atmosphere for the night. Another detail, the women do not dress in any special way to the morning celebration, as they do in the evening).
32. One of my best friend in Chuao was Cándida Bacalao, the second Captain of St. John the Baptist from 1979 to 1986. She had proved to be the most sensitive and intelligent of the women of Chuao. From the first moment we met in 1979, a current of mutual acceptance and empathy was established, and she became a very special person to me, both as informant and friend. After many conversations with Cándida, in 1984 she nominated me for membership in the Society. I have not asked myself to become a *sociata* of the St. John organization. That was a surprise Cándida gave to me. My candidacy was accepted, and I have continued to maintain my membership ever since. I clearly remember the manner in which Cándida explained what I had to do as a new member. She informed me that on June 24th, when the women were collecting alms, they were going to come to my door, and would probably sing a verse something like the following:
- "At your door have arrived/five or six with the man who plays/and they come to ask for a little verse from your mouth.
- In order to help me out, she suggested that I might answer in this fashion:

"Oh, from your mouth, people, you await/Oh, that my voices are not good/Oh, that my voices are not good/And I had hoped to bring you /The music of a sea siren/Oh, who commands you, minstrel/Let strength be created earnestly/With Helena, oh, let us eat without being hungry/Oh, let us eat without being hungry."

I followed Candida's advice, for not only had she been a member of the St. John Society for 31 years, but she was also my sponsor and my supporter. María Tecla also participated as a teacher in the lesson I was receiving. The two women were intimate friends and were also related, (one of María Tecla's son had four kids with one of Cándida's daughter) most importantly, they understood each other well. I shall never forget that meeting in 1984, for stimulated by a bottle of rum that I offered them, the women proceeded to improvise verses in point and counterpoint, in a totally spontaneous and often mischievous manner using humour, puns, and word-play. It was at that point that I realised the nature of these women's oral vitality and their exceptional qualities as artists and human beings. María Tecla at this time told me that "she doesn't belong more to the Society because she had some arguments, many years ago, with some women of the society, who disregarded her. So, she is a follower of Saint John the Baptist because of her promise and her devotion, but she belongs to him in the celestial way, not in any society here in earth".(1980)

But María Tecla, as 'a celestial' Sanjuanera still has an important position, but informal, in the festivity of St. John. She participates actively in all events. For example, when last year I asked Berta for some explanation about the festivity, she told me : "Ask María Tecla she is the only one who knows everything here."(Berta Aché,1989)

33. I did not realized immediately the importance of this chant. Later on when she died I understood her words. That chant which she performed alone, have had two objectives: To support me in public, as a future member of the society in her position of Second captain of St John, and to give us information about the illness she was suffering, a cancer in the belly, which killed her few months later). In the afternoon, the same day in her house we were talking (I had with me the tape recording). She gave me information about "medicine woman "in Chuao, and she did an evaluation of her behaviour in life, at the end she sang to me the following *Canto de Sirena*, that in this moment I did not understand in its deep significance:

- This copy [tape recording] is for when I die, Ay!, my little verses will be left.

-My little verses, ay! if I were a painter, ay! I would like to be a painter,

Ay! To picture you in my hand.

- Ay! Picture you, ay! in my hand picture you, so that when you would be absent,
I could open my hand and look at you.

-Ay! Look at you, I planted a plant, ha,ha, ay! a plant I planted
on a rock above Dorao, above Dorao, on a rock above Dorao

- Ay! A crown of thorn, a crown of thorn (.....)

- Ay! Lying down, ay! Juan (.....)if I were rich and had money
as the river has sand, I would buy Barquisimeto and El Tocuyo would be mine.

- Ay! Would be mine, I would buy Barquisimeto and El Tocuyo would be mine.

- Ay! Would be mine, I would buy Barquisimeto and El Tocuyo would be mine.

- Ay! Would be mine, Ay! With mahogany leaves, with mahogany leaves, I am going to
make
you a tree plantation.

- A tree plantation, I am going to make you a tree plantation, and on the countenance
of your
face, paint a spring.

-Ay! Spring, the day I die, do not go asking for me, ah.

- Asking for me, do not go asking for me, ay! Look for me in the cemetery, in the
cemetery,
but do not go crying.

-Ay! Crying, but do not go crying, ay! Jesus Christ is a teacher, ay!
Jesus Christ is a teacher, ah.

-Ah, Jesus Christ is a teacher, Jesus Christ is a teacher who does all things, ah.

- All things, who does all things, Ay! (....) will be salt and salt is undone by water, ah.

-I am leaving, ay! I am leaving, ah, if you leave, I leave, if you stay, I stay, ah, ah.
Ay! I am going to show you, ah.

34. *Sangueros:*

Ay! Loe Ay! Loea Ay! Lolo loa. (Chorus)

The flower of marjoram

Chorus

Give me a little glass of water

Chorus

How long, my life, my heart, how long.

Chorus

Loee Loea Loo Looa (Chorus)

Ay! My mother named me Rose

Chorus

Ay! My mother named me rose but I didn't like it

Chorus

the rose is fragile, and loose quickly its petals

Chorus

These verses made by Berta Aché did not have a precise meaning for her, she could not explain to me their significance, however, in a metaphorical way this *Sanguero* has to do with life, death and strengths. She said that probably she likes those most that particular year, as I understand, she likes to play with words, that can match the rhythm of the *caja*. "For example, I make one to this year performance, and I sung it several times, because it liked me this time more than others "Loe, loa, Loe/ I am going with the dawn/ And tonight I blow up (to exhaust)/ and tonight I blow up/ Loe,loe loa/ I am going with the dawn. I am running/ I am running/ Loe loa loa/ I am going with the dawn."(Berta, 1989).)

35. I was a witness to a very particular expression of these bonds during the 1980 celebration. On the morning of June 23rd, when the procession arrived at Cándida's house, there appeared to be no changes in the singing, yet an atmosphere of sadness, coupled with sweetness and warmth, seemed to hover about the women as they gathered around Cándida. She had chosen to dress in white; her hair was bound in a white kerchief. She had arranged her living room differently: in the room was a table with a cross at its centre, flanked by lit candles. Cándida had strewn a profusion of flowers and leaves around the cross. The women, dancing the *Sanguero* around Cándida, began each one in turn to sing verses referring to Cándida and her pain due to the death, a month previously, of her companion, Vicente Mijares, a captain of St. John:

"That flew away, oh, the bird that flew away, little Cándida/Oh, the cage was left empty, only the place was left/I have found the place empty, Berta, only the cage was left/...Oh, to weep, don't sit down to weep, Cándida, oh, give her courage...don't sit down to weep...Oh, to weep, don't sit before the altar...To Saint John the Baptist/the bird that flew away, every time I reach the point of the bird that flew away, oh/Oh, the flowers of the cemetery, Berta, the flowers of the cemetery, oh, I don't know what has happened to them, oh I don't know what has happened to them, that when the wind touches them, all have

withered, oh/;they have withered, all have withered...Oh, I am remembering you with tears and sighs, oh, with tears and sighs I am remembering you..."

As her friends rendered this homage to Cándida, tears began to run down her face, at which point Maria Tecla intervened, singing another verse, which she imbued with a tone of joy and hope. In this manner, balance and harmony were restored, and the ritual went on as in previous times, although no dancing to the drum went on at Cándida's house that year and only "Sangueros" and verses to St. John were offered the grieving woman.)

36. Prohibition in Caracas, S.XVIII. (See introduction, Confraternity of St. John the Baptist in the Church of St. Maurice, p.

37. The following *Canto de Sirena* or Song to St. John is an example of the several chants they performed, at that time:

Oh, Trinity, oh Most Blessed Sacrament, Oh Most Blessed Sacrament, Most Holy Trinity

-Bless me with your hands, oh, with your hands, bless me with your hands oh, embrace me with the cross, oh

-Oh with your hands, bless me with your hands, oh, embrace me with the cross

-Oh with the cross, oh so that it will always be with me, oh, in the name of Jesus

-Oh, to Jesus, I am going, I'm already bidding farewell, I'm bidding farewell, Saint John the Baptist, to your living room and your corridor

-Oh, corridor, to your living room and corridor, if you do not stay tonight, tomorrow the sun is going to kill you

-Then so much the better, oh alas, would that it would rain, alas, that it would rain, a rain storm from the north, oh, if I were a big decanter, I would gather it all up, ah

-I would gather it, oh, a rain storm of rum, oh, would that, alas, it would be a rum rain storm, I would gather it all up

-Oh, that it would rain on me, oh, alas, a rum rain storm, oh, alas, a rum rain storm, Cándida, that it would all fall on me, ah

Oh, would that it would fall on me, alas, my sisters, that it would fall on me, alas, a rum rain storm, ah

-Oh, of rum, I would gather it all up, oh, would that my mouth were a cask, oh, look, my belly a decanter, oh

-Decanter, I am leaving already, I bid farewell to your living room and your corridor, oh, I don't bid you farewell because I don't have the courage.

-Oh, when the bottle sounds, oh when the bottle sounds, Cándida, and the glass goes "tilín, tilán"

-Oh, tilín, tilán, tilín, tilán, when the bottle sounds and the glass, tilín, tilán

-When the bottle sounds, eheé, when the bottle sounds, oh, the glass, tilín, tilán, ah

-Tilín, tilín, oh, the glass, tilín, tilín, when this rooster crows, oh, I can't find an end to the glass, ah

-I can't find an end, Julio, the bottle is not enough for her, oh, the bottle is not enough for her, the bottle is not enough for her, be careful, boy, I can't find an end to the glass, ah

-Oh, I can't find an end to the glass, oh, that is why they call you the drunkard...

-And I am going home, Julio is waiting for me, he's going to look for a hatchet because he's going to chop down the tree...

-Because he's going to chop down the tree that we have in the road, oh, because it will be a road, oh, because it will be a road, my love, where we have our destiny, ah

-Chop the tree, on the beach there are a lot of people who arrived this morning and they could get by, I'm going to send them a car, oh, first he's going to chop it, ah

-Oh chop, I bet they can't get by, oh, that hacienda is very broad, look, not just anyone can jump in there ah.(St. John, 1984)

In these songs the structure is the same as those previously quoted. Throughout the verses it is seen how different topics are linked by means of a game of opposites: sacred-profane, and even social aspects of interest to the community.

For example, these songs alluded to the Blessed Sacrament, and the singers said good-bye to the Saint many times. From this they changed to a joking verse about it raining rum, and, without pause, throughout the verses, the women returned to a problem the community was having at that moment. For example, It so happened that the night before a hundred-year old mijao tree had fallen during a rain storm; the trunk of the tree was so large that it had blocked the road into the town. This was rather worrying for them because it meant there was no communication between the land and the beach, particularly given that it was the time of the festival of St. John. At this time many people were arriving by sea to observe the celebration.

38. In 1984, in Edita's house Sabina Chavez asked St John to cure Pipito, his son.
(Singers the women Edith Liendo, Berta Aché and Sabina Chávez)
The little eyes of the Baptist, are serene eyes, they do not deserve to cry, but I have to cry for them./For them, look at the Isora's face, look at the Isora's face, she has it covered./Gentlemen I am the dead man although the dead doesn't speak, I am the dead although the dead doesn't speak./ Doesn't speak, She covers her face because yesterday evening she didn't take out the flag to dance 'Sanguero'/I must punish her, so she has to learn her duties, Ay "she hadn't a good behaviour/Ay! Stop, Sabina I already punished Isora/Gentlemen I am the dead, although the dead doesn't speak, I am the one who was buried in front of the green palm tree./Green palm tree, Ay ! Gentlemen I am the dead, although the dead doesn't speak ./Doesn't speak! I am the one who was buried in front of the green palm tree./Sovereign, because his spirit stays, his spirit stays Ay! with the sovereign Father /Ay! St. John the Baptist give him health, give Pipito health, that he can go and light a candle for you /Light a candle, Saint John the Baptist I have a compromise St. John the Baptist, I have to look if somebody is waiting for me, Give health to Pipito, St. John the Baptist."(1984)
39. Manumitted. They did not work on the field. They were servants on the owner's houses. They have another status in comparison to other black slaves. That could be the reason for not dancing to the drums.
40. "St. John is stolen on St. Peter, day by the captain, the *cajero* or Saint John's horse. In ancient times they always did this. Now they do not do it every festivity. This year they wanted to steal St. John. We had left him in Maria Tecla's house, but she locked St, John in a room and they couldn't take him away. You know María Tecla she took the Saint to her room, locked up the door but remained with us until dawn. Later she went to sleep, and didn't allow us to take St. John away."(Berta, 1989)
41. When Ignacio Hermoso saw the kind of bitten he had, he said : I am a dead man, he last only few hours, he arrived home and died. He was my relative, but he never practised black magic, he was a "curioso ", a good medicine man. My mother told me that she heard that Ignacio want to have a pact with the devil, so he came to the field to meet him. First Ignacio found a very big hole, and from inside an enormous bull came out, and then a big bird, a zamurazo. (Black bird which eats rubbish) Ignacio Hermoso did not like the way the devil

was behaving and said to him, "I can not do any treat with you, because I don't like the things you have done." So, the devil appeared and said to Ignacio: "You are a very strong man, and I cannot do any agreement with you. "That means that my uncle Ignacio did not want to learn black magic. For him to be a medicine man, was to have a kind of wisdom to do good things. I have heard that in Chuao were many sorcerers at that time, but now all these old people died and the young did not know anything about it." But, she also tell me that still some people of Chuao that she believed have some special powers, "one of them, I have heard has a trunk with special powers, if he touch a person or animal with it, they immediately died. This stick was cut out a Good Friday at 12 m. It has to be cut from the tree called San Cristóbal, the day and the hour already mentioned." Another happening was the strange death of a woman in Chuao, which she believed were the result of black magic. "A person gave her some kind of soup prepared with water taken from a tree called celba, and after she drunk that, her belly grew up and and she start to urinate constantly, and at the end she died, nobody could stop the water coming out. Many years ago nobody wanted to come to Chuao because we were considered dangerous people, all sorcerers, so when you went out of Chuao, you never said that you were from Chuao. Now that way of seeing Chuao have changed." (Maritza Tagliafierro, 1986)

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

The quest for Africa in the Americas

There are many difficulties in attempting a study of African American culture. These include problems of identifying the African sources of particular elements, of distinguishing African elements of the new cultures that developed, and of the inaccuracy of information referring to the origin and distribution of the slaves. From the beginning of the colonization the society was new, formed by Spaniards and Africans who came simultaneously to the Americas. The European as the dominant group and the African as slaves. Thus there is not a pre-European society which is impregnated by African features. These societies were from their origins American societies in the process of re-creation of their Euro-African components. The truth is that from the beginning the Africans in their condition as slaves belonged to the low strata of society. They were unprotected and exploited and consequently affected in their cultural background. However, the *dominant Spanish* culture protected and stimulated some cultural values *among* the Africans *in order* to reinforce the established social structure. To analyse the cultural contribution of the Africans, it is necessary to look at different aspects, for example: the plantation system created a society, in which the slaves were important, in most of the cases, only as a labour force. So, the slaves worked in an organization structured as a prison system. The owners of the plantations did not encourage the formation of cohesive groups within the slave population. Moreover, the Africans came from societies where the culture was based on oral tradition. The knowledge, the integral vision of the culture, was the privilege of the adults and specifically the elders. The Africans sent to the Americas were young, most of them between 15 and 20 years of age. Therefore due to their youth, had less to contribute to the new social cultural organisation. In relation to the slaves' way of living, such

as building houses, dress making and even food the owners of the plantations established a number of regulations which apparently did not permit the preservation of cultural patterns. For example, all the African traditions in relation to the ornaments of dress and decoration of houses were lost. However, in Spanish America the interest of the Spaniards in implanting Catholicism permitted the preservation of some African or Indian cultural elements, useful to reinforce the religious system.

Moreover, at the present time many aspect of performance, particularly in the USA, seen as much derived from contemporary mass media as from remembrance of an African heritage. In any case, the quest for Africa in the Americas is much more complex than that "drawn in terms merely of the presence or absence of Africanism" (1) As Edison Carneiro says : "In no part of Brazil do the cults appear with enough uniformity to permit identification as 'pure types'". (2) On the other hand, every study of this kind is a step towards understanding" the process of culture". (3)

Chuaio is a community of people descended from slaves of African origin. Their very existence in Venezuela is, in itself, an African presence in the Americas, and over the years, the people of Chuaio have established a distinct identity for themselves, as *Chuaeños*, in Venezuela. This chapter summarizes aspects of this process of definition under three headings: sociological, historical, religious.

Sociological

The family system of the people of Chuaio is similar to that of other Afro-Venezuelan and Afro-American communities. The common characteristics of the system include variable mating forms: legal marriage, non legal coresidential unions, and non legal extraresidential unions. There is a high degree of conjugal instability. A large number of households are headed by single females who occupy a pivotal position in kinship, domestic and residential groups. The bases for a causal explanation of these characteristics could be the slave and plantation system and

economic marginality in former centuries. After their emancipation, African descendants were economically powerless, they had no control of the profits produced by their labour. Emancipation did not produce a very significant change in the legal and economic status of ex-slaves and provided them with a limited number of opportunities. They have continued to be economically marginal because of low wages and limited occupational opportunities. These characteristics have been reinforced until the present time by the lack of interest by the state and the dominant groups of Venezuelan society.

On the other hand, the experience of slavery produced a special mode of thought, which is concerned with a need of subsistence sufficient only to survive. This manner of living, in certain ways, continues in Chuao, in the 20th. century, and it is shared by other Venezuelan groups. There is a common phrase heard of different communities in Venezuela, and their equivalent in Cuba and Brazil "the problem here is not dying". This philosophy of life emerges as something ancestral, and atavistic which enable marginal groups to live and enjoy life, even though at the same time it creates obstacles to their integration into a possibility for development.

In the case of Chuao one basis for the social integration of the community is the cycle of festivities. These give meaning to their way of life. Moreover, the most respected families of the community are those intimately linked with the leadership of the festivals, especially Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist.

Every performance of the art forms that constitute Corpus Cristi and St. John the Baptist, although similar in structure, is a unique experience in which individuals can express themselves, their skills and their re-interpretation of the norms that make up Chuao society. This manifests itself in dance, music, drums, prayers, poetry, songs and stories, that not only reaffirm appropriate social behaviour, but, perhaps more importantly, they affirm individuality, creativity, status and personal achievement. Thus, men and women are as much creators of culture as they are products of it.

The festivities can also be seen as instruments with which the Chuao society regulates individuals, and simultaneously, incorporates them into the general pattern of Venezuelan society. The whole cycle of festivities of Chuao, not only St. John the Baptist and Corpus Christi, plays a social role in bringing people together, and giving them a specific identity to people, and defining at the same time, a distinctive place in Venezuela.

Socialization and education

The traditions in Chuao are preserved predominantly through oral transmission from one generation to the other. A whole corpus of folklore and beliefs persist through the society in this way. Children learn about the Chuao festivities and their place in society, through the teaching of the Doctrine. They learn the basic elements of Catholicism, such as the belief in God, The Holy Trinity, the Sacraments, the Commandments and also learn prayers that they will need during the festivities. Then, the observation of the festivals permit them to learn in an indirect way, the songs, dances, the organization of the festivity and in general how they have to behave in order to fulfil the rules which lead the festivities. Children can participate in any festivities they want, and the permission is given by the leaders of the Societies of Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist. They also have their own celebration, a procession of the Virgin of the Rosary, which is celebrated on Easter Sunday. Through the organization and the performance of this procession children under the leadership of María Tecla learn the structure of the festivity, which responds to the basic pattern of the all festivities of Chuao.

In 1985 María Tecla was observed teaching the last lesson of the Doctrine, before the children participated in the procession of the Virgin of the Rosary. Children gathered in the church, to hear María Tecla give the principal parts of the Doctrine to them, they then repeated everything she said, and in conclusion she taught them a song which expressed the same basic elements .

The children learned it all by heart. She reaffirmed the Doctrine by singing. Prayers linked to songs, dances and music, are the pattern of all the festivities in Chuao, and are of the primary importance to the preservation of the tradition.

Another example of how tradition is transmitted takes place on the evening of Easter Sunday, when the first rehearsal for the preparation of Corpus festivity is performed. The hierarchy of the Corpus Society and the community gather in a space near the churchyard (the same space is always used to the rehearsals of Corpus Christi) to see the children, who want to participate in the festival. The captains and the rest of the devil dancers observe and evaluate the children's skill, giving them the advice on how to improve their abilities. For the St. John the Baptist festivity, children imitate songs, dances, processions and at the same time they created songs, following the basic musical pattern of St. John the Baptist cycle .

This was also illustrated on the 25th of June 1984 when the children of Eddy, Yolanda, Pedro and Sabina performed the cycle of St. John the Baptist festivity. These children, all between ten and twelve years of age, included Hormiga, Chipilín, Arelis, Oscar, Mao. (Plate 71, p. 390) The children imitated the procession of St. John the Baptist. Oscar (Yolanda's son) performed the role St. John's horse carrying a doll on his head, which represented the Saint. The rest were singing *Sangueros* . They stopped at Edita's house, placed the doll in the middle of the lounge and danced the *sanguero* and then started singing *Cantos de Sirena*, of their own creation. They improvised verses, relating them to every day life: (comments about the festivities, behaviour of people of Chuao, events in school, and so on) and mixed them with other verses, which they had learned from oral tradition of St. John's festivity. (see appendix II, p. 304) After the *Canto de Sirena*, they used an empty milk container as a drum, and sang and danced to it.

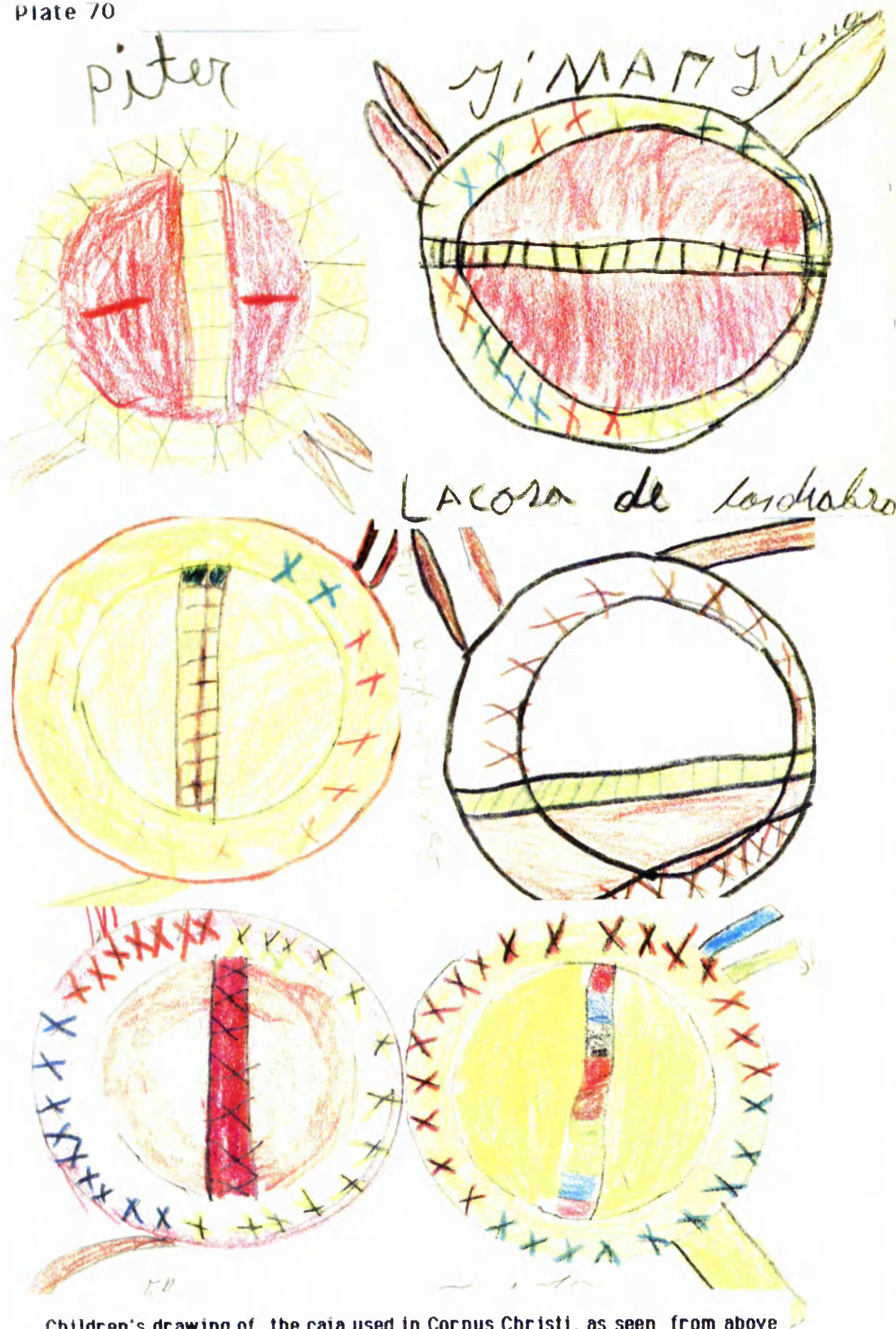
The dancing to the drum is another example of the vitality of the oral tradition. Children of the *sanjuaneros* learn by imitation to dance in a style similar to their parents. However, the new generation of dancers have in many ways been



1. Children imitating the devils. 1981



2. A child beats
a can as caja . 1981



Children's drawing of the caja used in Corpus Christi, as seen from above

. Octavio Chavez's drawing : the Church of Chuao and a sanjuanera . 1984



. The children Sosas, Morillo and Almenar imitating the procession of St. John the Baptist. 1984.

influenced by other rhythms learned through the mass media, and many of the younger people incorporate these in their dances. This does not mean that the youngsters are unable to dance the traditional dances of Chuao. The women of the Society permit the dancing of new rhythms by younger community members for certain periods of time during the festivities, but afterward they ask them to dance in the style of Chuao, and the youngsters are quick to comply, with no objections. Herein one can see both the separation and the communication between generations, for without barring innovation, tradition is preserved. The wisdom of the older generation lies in allowing the younger an opportunity for self-expression, while at the same time establishing the differences which separate these extraneous influences from the town's tradition. In this way, the young people take note of the distinctions between the two forms of expression. The children not only learn dancing and singing skills but also behavioural pattern which are governed by their gender for the festivities of Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist set out distinctions between the sexes. They preserve aspect of belief and practices against social changes, and yet in another context can be a vehicle of social change by incorporating new elements.

To sum up, the way in which children learn to participate in the festivals is more than just learning a dramatic role, but learning one's place in Chuao society, and ultimately, as *chuaños*, in Venezuela. (Plate 69, 70, p.388, 389)

The dramatisation of gender roles

The festivities emphasise a clear demarcation as well as an interplay between male and female roles with Corpus Christi as a male festivity and St. John the Baptist as a female festival. This delimitation determines the dominant role of one of the sexes, although in bulk there is an interplay of gender roles. Indeed the paradoxes and ambiguities of relationships between men and women could be said to ^{be} represented in the paradoxes and ambiguities of the festivities.

It is quite clear after years of observation and participation of the Chuao festivities, that the oral tradition is totally alive. Songs, dances, stories pass from one generation to another, thus illustrating the pride of being born in Chuao.

The older generation are not inhibited by their lack of formal education, and whilst some have sent their sons to school they have always reminded them that they must not forget their town and their origin. So far this has been effective, and they express their love for the home town by constantly returning for the festivals, which subconsciously reaffirm their beliefs and origins.

The Corpus Christi festival in effect defines a safe area within which the defeat of Satan, Prince of Darkness, by Christ, the light of the world, is successfully dramatised. This is revealed in two ways: by the danced fall of the devils at the church, and by the increasing irrelevance of the mask the closer one comes to Christ himself. However, this performance is not without danger as the imitation of the devil may conjure up Satan himself, and individual safety in this event depends upon conformity to precise rules about the wearing of masks and relics and the place and time of performance. Indeed I have already referred to this context of tradition and performances as maintained by women, a context within which men perform and recruit younger males to continue the performance.

The danger inherent in the Corpus Christi celebration ("this is a dangerous religion") can be contrasted with the joy, happiness and liberation that characterise the festive cycle of St. John the Baptist. Here, paradox and ambiguities are of a different order, for while the Saint protects and confers benefit on his devotees, he is represented as a child, and in need of the benefit and protection of maternal care as provided by the member of his society.

Direct male participation in the St. John the Baptist cycle is limited to the male overseer, who keeps order, the drummer, and the "horse". It is thus in no way comparable to the female participation in Corpus Christi whether as the guardians of tradition and as the maker of costumes (and in some cases the

makers of mask also), and provider of food. Rather we can see a contrast between the child, in the image of St. John the Baptist, and the devil, in the adult males of the community. While the festival of Corpus Christi dramatises the fall of the devil, the celebration of St. John the Baptist reveal and celebrate the power of women . The image is also the focus and occasion of the three forms of musical performance.

The songs women compose deal with their perspective of the world, a feminine domain centred around different aspects of love and sexuality. Expressions of love to the Saint in the *sangueos* belong to the spiritual world, while the *Cantos de Sirena* in which women provide commentary on events in the community since the last festival, unite the sacred and profane, overt sexuality is presented through the *Golpes* . Here women take the imitation in acting out their desires to be in love with men but at the same time expressing their independence from them, and control over them. For the dancing to the drums St. John turns aside, thereby permitting his women to express inner desires linked with their sexual role, and the secrecy inherent in femininity. Men have no choice but to submit themselves to the women who feel confident enough in their power to permit men a certain freedom, exciting them by offering their bodies as dance partner, but still maintaining their distance. Female control over male dance, energy and sexuality is seen most dramatically in the Lizard's cave.

The contrast between *Sanguero* and the *Golpe* are not simple expressions of the divine and the profane, but two aspects of a unity. In the Chuao celebration, Saint John the Baptist is identified with love whether spiritual or sexual.

The cult of St. John the Baptist illustrates the positive energy of women in another way, by the numerous petitions to St. John and the offerings people give to him for favours granted. Access to the Saint is after all, within the authority of his society.

Although women in every day life might appear to have a subordinate position, the festivals reveal very different perception of their relationship with men.

Historical

Chuaao festivals are the product of an African response to Spanish popular religion. The Africans who were sent to Chuaao were of diverse origin though many came from Angola and Congo. According to María Tecla, some of the last slaves the origin of which she remembered were from Loango.

Four important moments in the history of Chuaao can be related to the development of the festivities of St. John the Baptist and Corpus Christi :

The beginning, sometime within the last decades of the 17th century, when the first contingent of slaves came to Chuaao.

The 18th century with the imposition of various prohibitions.

The end of the 19th or beginning of the 20th century, from which period the festivities are today directly related.

The 1980 's when there was exposure to other festivities in other parts of Venezuela.

In the 17th. century two facts were relevant:

The owner of the plantation ordered the teaching of the religious faith to the slaves, following the Catechism permitted by the Council of Trent, (1562-63).

The will of Catalina Mexía which gave the slaves the stability and security so that they could not be sold or expelled from Chuaao.

In the 18th century :

The document N° 78, 1767, rules were established by the Patrons of the Obra Pía to control the lives of the slaves (see page 63) and mirror the prohibitions imposed by Diez Madroñero, of Caracas in that epoch.

The visit of the Bishop Mariano Martí, in 1772, in which he determined the need of the slaves and their spiritual salvation. He was concerned with the sexual and drinking habits of the slaves and insisted that once a month they made confession and communion although this order was never really adhered to. He also made other dispositions which followed the same pattern of Diez Madroñero's rules.

Through this century, the Administrators of Chuao had also to face problems caused by the proliferation of runaway slaves. They tried to cope with the problem by establishing more prohibitions and started to control the access to Chuao. Only faithful slaves were allowed to go to the beach to fish, and that was restricted to Saturdays or Sundays. Perhaps these restrictions were reinterpreted, by slaves as creating boundaries, for example as defined in the Corpus Christi festival where there is a contrast between safe and dangerous space.

It is important to note, as a common feature, that the African's position in the Americas was covered by isolated *Cédulas* (Royal orders) dealing with special problems. "On 31 May 1789, Charles IV of Spain proclaimed the **Código Negro español**, through which he was introducing a regimen designed to govern the master -slaves relationship in all his American possessions. This code incorporated ideas from both the **Santo Domingo statute of 1785** and **the French Code Noir of 1685**. Among its provisions were the following: 1." Slaves must be given education in religious matters, the master must provide for this. 2. Slaves must have "Christian and decent clothes.. Officials of the *audiencias* and the church were to conduct inspections two or three times a year to hear slave complaints and check that the code was enforced. In Cuba, Luisiana and Venezuela it appears that the code was never issued in its entirety as well as in other parts of LatinAmerica." (4)

In the case of Chuao, the purpose of the Doctrine might have been as much to establish control over the slaves as real concern for their spiritual development. Priests were not anxious to preach in the Chuao region and therefore the responsibility of the teaching of the Doctrine was placed within the hands of the loyal slaves. This obviously affected the transmission and preservation of the Chuao tradition.

The people of Chuao found a way to continue dancing and expressing their beliefs through the festivities, by incorporating the prohibitions as part of the ritual. While some aspects of the performance might seem structured according to a generalized African gender-based categorisation, there may as well be a

historical justification. For example, women are forbidden to dance in Corpus Christi festival, (see p. 121) and the statue of St. John The Baptist is removed to a room when the community starts to dance to the drums. (see p.) In this way, they fulfil the rules imposed by the Patrons of the *Obra Pía*, even though with the passing of the years, these rules have been fully incorporated as part of the festivities, without remembering their origins.

The 18th century appears to be very significant in the development of Chuao society and obviously in the make up of the performances. From that epoch came most of the rules which, until the present day define the ritual base of the festivities.

The 19th century seemed at first a continuation of all the dispositions established in the former century. For example, the teaching of the Doctrine, was reinforced in the document N^o 158, 1817, in the *Reglamento de trabajo de la hacienda*. The patrons wanted to control the slaves, and religion appeared to be one of the most effective ways to ensure this. On the other hand, the Independence Movement which started in 1808, affected Chuao society, as well as the rest of Venezuela. The church divided, some priests supported the revolution and others stayed with the Royalists. The slaves of Chuao, according to the documents, and oral tradition, were on the side of Bolívar, who was in favour of the freedom of all slaves. The administrators of the plantation, following orders of the Patrons, and obviously royalist, established a restrictive control of Chuao, which converted the town into a kind of jail. The architecture of the slaves accommodation was controlled and examples remain so today. However instability and uprising continued to affect not only Chuao but the whole of Venezuela. The administrators were changed and no one wanted to go to the plantation because of the atmosphere and the slave revolts. That produced, economic chaos and according to documents, the plantation was in ruins, with the slaves living in miserable conditions. Yet the relationship with the Church in Caracas, continued as the documents show. The economic recovery of the plantation was

due to the organization established in 1818 and reinforced by other dispositions in 1825, in which the new group in power realized the importance of the plantation to the restoration of the economy of Venezuela. 1825 marked the end of the control of the plantation by the church and the beginning of the Administration of the Central University of Venezuela, due to the decision of Simón Bolívar,

Looking at the 18th and 19th centuries in Chuao it could be said that the former was the time of establishment of a basic religious order which defined the festivities of Chuao, specifically the festivities of Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist. During the war of Independence in the 19th century some destabilisation occurred but, it gave the people of Chuao the feeling of belonging to a country. With the triumph of the Venezuelans, a reorganisation of the country started, and consequently the restructuring of the economy. Chuao, as an important cocoa plantation from the colonial times, was one of the preoccupations of the political power. In the 19th century the plantation was reorganized. For the first time the people of Chuao could gain directly from their labour in the cocoa plantation. Elsewhere stability serves in turn to have promoted attachment to the cycle of festivals thereby giving Chuao its distinct identity

In Caracas the black confraternities lost their power as they fell into a state of decadence, Chuao was benefited from this fact and a revitalization of the festivities took place. In the case of St. John the Baptist it was due to the *manumisa* (freed slave) Damiana Liendo, who brought an image of St. John the Baptist to Chuao, and continued the tradition already established, but giving it a new strength. This affirmation is secure in the memories people have about Damiana and her relationship with the festival of St. John the Baptist.

The Corpus Christi festival, as it is remembered by the elders, was revitalized from the time of Martín Gutiérrez and Camilo Borges. (see p.47) E.g.: at that time the way of making the masks was fixed, the payment of the *caja* in the house of Camilo was established, and the rules to manage the society were

reaffirmed. Chuao people continued celebrating their festivities isolated from most of the rest of Venezuela, until the year 1970 when the Institute of Folklore heard about the festivities of Chuao and went there. Another revitalization of the festivities, happened in the year 1979.

In the case of Corpus Christi, at this time a new generation took the control of the Corpus Society, giving new strength to the festival which was dying due to the poor leadership from one of the captains. The very conservative view about the skills required from the males of the community for participation in the festivity, restricted entrance to most of the young men who wanted to become devil dancers. So, the new leaders, with less conservative ideas permitted massive participation by the males of Chuao. This was done without losing the identity of the Corpus Christi festivity and they were able to innovate and accept the changes needed to maintain the vitality and the energy of Corpus Christi festival. (See p. 273, note 42)

In relation to St. John the Baptist festivity something similar appears to have happened, but it was not a result of a serious crisis in the society of St. John as it was in Corpus society. However, in the absence of a leader they looked for somebody younger, who could offer new responses and ideas as a way of managing the funds of the society, in order to improve the cult to St. John the Baptist. Thus, they elected a young woman as the first captain of the society. (see p. 373, note 26)

This revitalization preserved the basic ritual structures of the festivities, while at the same time accepting new forms of performance. One example of the preservation of the tradition is seen in the hours at which the bell be rung. Jesús Franco who is the caretaker of the church every day rings the bell at 6 a.m., 12 noon, and 6 p.m., the three times in the day for reciting the Angelus. He goes to church, with María Tecla and other elders, to pray at these times. This is a continuation of the disposition established from the colonial times and reinforced on different occasions.

The latest stage in this history is in the participation in national meetings of Corpus Christi devils and St. John the

Baptist societies in Venezuela. Thereby publicizes a distinctive identity for the people of Chuao within Venezuela.

Religious

The Popular religion of today in Latin America clearly derives from the Spanish and Portuguese conquests and the arrival of European Catholicism. This included the religious brotherhoods, which became lay organizations promoting public worship, and especially in the festivals dedicated to the saints. Some of these organisations became powerful enough to act independently of ecclesiastical wishes.

The societies of Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist of Chuao are good examples of the survival of medieval elements of Iberian Catholicism. According to Bartolomé de las Casas:

"The Spaniards undoubtedly have an obligation of Duty upon 'em to instruct 'em in the Doctrine of Christ; but they are so ignorant themselves, that this not much to be wonder'd at if they take no care to inform others" (5)

It is generally recognised that as the people who came to the Americas were not well educated themselves (with some exceptions), the Catholicism that was taught by them was very simplistic. However, one culture never wholly absorbs or displaces another. There is always some degree of interpenetration. The type of culture which emerges is never exactly identical with either of the original cultures. The question very naturally arises as to what extent was Christianity modified by the Indians or Africans, or vice versa? This questions is very complex and it is very difficult to give an accurate answer. However, it could be said that a similarity of cultural elements facilitates fusion. Consequently any similarities between the religions would be an aid in the process of conversion and assimilation.

As Mariano Picón Salas expressed:

"The religious festivals were the clearest and most colourful symbol of the interrelation of the Spaniards the Natives and Africans. Incorporated into Catholic practices were the dances, pantomimes, masquerades or ceremonies that to this day attend the celebration of traditional Spanish holy days- the Corpus Christi, the Magi Kings, or St. John the Baptist - by the mixed populations of Latin America. Important festivals were St. John the Baptist and Corpus Christi. The St. John the

Baptist festival explained the Sacrament of Baptism simply and encouraged people to receive it. A series of morality plays- The fall of the first Parents, the Annunciation of the Nativity of St. John, The Annunciation of Our Lady and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist provided a lively reconstruction of the theological history of man until his redemption by the coming of Christ and the institution of the first Christian Sacrament. The Corpus Christi popularized the mystery of the Eucharist, and symbolized the Church triumphant. the Gospel theme was adapted locally by having the people represent the parade of the Magi Kings along with the Shepherds who came with offerings. " (6)

By correlating the Christian saints and calendar with indigenous deities and ritual cycles, the church assured the development of a popular religiosity. This, however, departed from orthodox teaching and together with the lack of clergy and the delegation of the teaching of the Catholic Doctrine, to people of the community all helped in the development of local forms of popular religion.

These general features which are universal in Latin-America can be fully appreciated and illustrated by the religious cultural manifestations in Chuao, supported by the Doctrine of María Tecla, which emphasised precisely these two sacraments : Communion and Baptism and the Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist festivities.

Where Indians were in the majority, such as in Mexico or Peru, the Spaniards took time to instruct them in Catholicism. The conversion of the Africans however was initially unimportant as they were simple commodities, an inferior race, which did not deserve instruction in the Christian religion.

In places where the populace, who worked in the plantations, were mostly black such as in Venezuela, the teaching of the Doctrine was also a means of establishing social control, as the workers were the main capital value of the plantation. In Chuao the already scarce Indian population rapidly disappeared from starvation or integration with the Africans. By the end of the 18th. century, when Bishop Mariano Martí visited Chuao, no Indians lived there. Thus, from colonial times people

of Chuao have been teaching the Doctrine and it was a duty of the Patrons of the *Obra Pía* to instruct them.

It can be traced by written sources that religious teaching was to begin with the teaching of the officials of the church but later it was delegated to the slaves, where the elders, who had learnt of the Doctrine passed it to the new generation, for example Juan Bautista Liendo and other in that generation of Loango slaves of Chuao, quoted by María Tecla.

As in many other plantations, Chuao has a small church, and a wide churchyard where all the events of the life cycle takes place. The distribution of the physical spaces in Chuao, linked religious and economic powers. The churchyard is the place where the cocoa has been dried from colonial times until today and in which people meet for the festivals. All the houses surrounding the churchyard were the offices of the Administration and for the storage of the cocoa. The *Casa del Alto*, beside the church was the home of the Administrator and his family. So this physical area, defined from the colonial times, was the centre of power and linked religion with economy. Nowadays, as a continuation of the past, the oldest and important families of the community are the owners of the houses near the church. The churchyard and surroundings remain the sacred (safe) space of the town during the festivities.

It was difficult to find a priest for the church in Chuao as they tended to prefer to work with the middle and upper classes in urban areas. Chuao had no Indians, it was populated by slaves who had no money to pay the expenses of the priest. It is documented in the *Obra Pía* that in the 18th century some Jesuits did attend religious services, and charged nothing for their work. (7) It appears, however, to be an exception in the religious life of the town. Chuao to the present day fails to attract the attention of the Official Church.

Thus the attitude of the Official Church to Chuao and the fact that the teaching of the Doctrine was placed in the hands of the slaves appear to have produced firstly: a development and enhancement of the festivities, and secondly: a reaffirmation and strength in Catholic beliefs. The centre of the religious life is

closely linked to the cult of the saints and the organization of the festivals led by the respective societies.

The Catholic religious tradition in Chuao has been strong enough to reject the introduction of other religions in the town. Some of the *Chuaeños*, who live in urban areas, outside Chuao, have become protestants in the last decade. María Tecla as preserver of the Catholic tradition of Chuao, has occasionally expressed her disapproval and has treated them as traitors to Chuao. (1980) Approximately twenty years ago, she expelled some protestants from the town, including a doctor, who had tried to convince people about the advantages of the protestant interpretation of the Bible and contraceptive methods; another case can be cited when a woman having returned from Maracay, where she was exposed to the *Santeros* (leaders of the religious Cuban-Yoruba movement: *Santería*) erected an altar secretly in her house. When the people of Chuao found out, she was accused of being a witch and wishing doom on Chuao society. The police arrested her and she was put in jail until a member of the society of Corpus Christi rescued her. She was then forgiven by the community, and she did not continue the *Santería*.

The principal basic beliefs of Catholicism are presented in the teaching of the Doctrine, but with the exception of María Tecla, Augusta, Jesús Franco, and perhaps some other women, most people cannot give any explanation about the ideas which support the festivities. This, clearly, defines the particular interests the community have in them, which are focused in the practice of festivities rather than in abstract thoughts or a search for reasons to explain why a festivity is performed in this way and not in another. They participate in their festivities with faith in a tradition firmly established through the centuries.

Interestingly the official documents of the **Obra Pía**, only mention the contribution of the plantation to the festivities of The Immaculate Conception and St. Nicolás de Bari in Chuao. They even document the permanent contribution to the celebration of other festivities in Caracas, such as the Good Friday and the *Virgen de las Mercedes*. There all perhaps, more "straight forward" examples of Catholic devotion.

However it never mentions the celebrations of Corpus Christi or St. John the Baptist. If these two festivities are the centre of unity of Chuao people why are they never named in the detailed documents of the **Obra Pia** ? Could it be an unconscious mistake or perhaps an intentional omission to avoid undue attention to its existence? If it were the latter, was that a conscious act of rejecting manifestations intimately linked with a non-catholic, African heritage? Or was it a result of the general neglect of the Church and the upper classes (for whom the Corpus Christi festival generally had great importance) for the life and beliefs of the rural and humble people?

There are two celebrations dedicated to St. John the Baptist, one on his birthday, (June) and another in December, immediately following the festival of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, the official Patron of Chuao. As already detailed in the St. John the Baptist chapter, there are marked differences between the two celebrations. One fulfils the beliefs of the community and the other complies to the faith of the established church.

The question then arises as to the possible importance of an African heritage and its incorporation within the festivities St. John the Baptist and Corpus Christi . In the Corpus Christi festivity, for example, the preparation of the devils, the secret prayers, the division of the town into dangerous and safe areas, the prohibitions, the protective significance of the masks, the *Sayona*, masked as a woman with a short beard, the mother of the devils who never gets old: likewise, in St. John the Baptist, the dance to the drums, the antiphonal character of the *Cantos de Sirena*, the ambiguity and ambivalence of the Saint, the festivity of Juana Manuela, all of these aspects might be a re-interpretation of African ritual concerns through the sacramental system and popular devotion of Spanish Catholicism. In all of this, perhaps we can see the evolution of cultural forms among people displaced and transplanted from possibly diverse background, drawing upon whatever was at hand in the formation of a new sense of identity and tradition.

At the end of each cycle of festivities, with the exception of the Corpus Christi, when the visitors have left the town, some members of the community, (generally, the *sanjuaneros*) perform a procession. They carry a doll, beat the drum, giving the doll a name and making and reciting verses to it. In 1989, the day after the St. John the Baptist procession, Eddy Liendo, dressed as man, and Yolanda Almenar, beating the drum, were carrying a doll (a piece of wood, in the form of a head) through the street. They entered houses singing and reciting verses in the name of the doll, called Neron. Some old women have this type of sculpture hidden in a wardrobe in their houses. The people of Chuao cannot explain the origin of these performances, only that they came from "older times". According to the Cuban writer Fernando Ortiz, in his book **Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba**, processions carrying dolls were common features in the Congo tradition. But the important fact here is not the possible origin of the dolls or the processions, but that they are performed by Chuao people only in the presence of Chuao people, once all the visitors have gone. Might this indicate a deeper element within Chuao culture, which provides a final definition and preservation of a unique Chuao identity?

Notes

1. Melville Herskovitz. **the New World Negro**, p. 23
2. Edison Carneiro. **Candomblés da Bahia**, p. 26-29
3. Roger Bastide. **African Civilization in the New World**, p. 39
4. Leslie Rout. **The African experience in Spanish America**, p. 83-84
5. Bartolomé de las Casas. **An Account of the first voyages and Discoveries made by the Spaniards in America**, p. 117
6. Mariano Picón Salas. **A Cultural History of Spanish America**, p. 63
7. **Obra Pía**, p. 270

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Appendices

*pp 1 confused
presented*

Appendix 1.

Doc. 14.

The slaves on both lists were distributed as follows: Twenty married couples, (obviously 20 men and 20 women), with 21 children. Single slaves: 30 men, 3 women and 12 children. Children, some women and one man appeared only with Christian names, making a total of 48 slaves, and in this analysis they have not been taken into consideration. The rest made a total of 59, which was distributed as follows:

15 married men with African names; 2 American; 1 Spanish; 2 other names; 1 racial mixture.

6 married women with African names; 1 American; 1 other names. 1 racial mixture.

18 single men with African names; 5 American; 2 other names; 3 place of birth (criollo or bozal) ; 1 racial mixture.

African names:* (Geographical names have been sorted out trying to identify the possible origin of slaves. That adds some information to note 11)

African origins

Anchico de Gibraltar : 1 ?

Gibraltar: 2?

Bañón: 6 Bango (tribu) Belgian Congo:

Bangho (one of the tributaries of the Congo river, near Cameroon)

Buila: 2 Buhiga (**Belgian Congo**, near Tanganika Lake)

Buipe (**Gold Coast**) More likely to be from Gold Coast

Cacheo: 4 Cacheo. Main Portuguese station was Santiago Island in the Cape Verde archipelago. Most flourishing of the **Santiago settlement** was **Cacheo** on the river of the same name, which had a trade extending south to Sierra Leone)

Carabal : 4 (**Calabar**, near the coast and Fernando Po)

Congo: 7 Río Congo, **Congo**

Folupa: 1 Hispanic name from Wolof. Senegal

Ganguela: 1 Benguela, **Angola**, town on the river, near the coast.

Lamba: 2 Corruption of Loanda? or Samba, Angola, in North Cuanza, very near Loanda.

Lubolo: 3 Lubalo, river in the Lunda Region, **Angola** (Lubanda : Belgian Congo, interior Congo near the river Luala)

Matamba: 8 Matala small lake formed by the Cunene river: Angola; (Matamba: Mountain near the Kenyasa lake, Tanganyka, Matana: Belgian Congo, edge of the Tanganyka lake. More likely, the first one.

Malemba: 2 Malemba Pta. Point. Angola

Muisa: 5 Muhinga: Belgian Congo. Muise : **Angola**

Mutemo: 7 Mutengwa, Mutombo, Mutoto: Belgian Congo. Mutumbo: near Benguela: **Angola**

Mandinga 2 Mandink (**Liberia, Sierra Leone?**)

Moron 2 Morondo: **French West Africa**, near Ivory Coast

Samba: Samba: Angola,

Sabala: 1 Saala, North /Africa, **Algeria?** or Spanish name

Tamango 1 Tama **Angola**, near Benguela

Quimbende 6 Quimbonge : Angola near Loanda, Other similars are from Congo Quimbele, Quimbombe, in the same region, the nearest to the coast is the Angola .

American names

Margarita 4 Caribbean island; formerly pirate haunt. English runaway slaves from this island came to the different towns on the coast of Venezuela.

Carayaca: 1 Town near the central coast of Venezuela

Campeche: 2 Campeche Bay, Mexico, near Veracruz

Guayacana: 1 ?

Spanish names

De Ibarra 1

Neither African nor American names

Portuguese 1

Flemish 2

Unidentify names

Venado ? 1

Place of birth

Criollo 4

Racial mixture?

Mulata 1 Could be also from Africa, Mulala: Belgian Congo, or Mulaza from Angola.

Appdx 2.

Doc. Nº 19

In relation to other specifications, there are 20 men with African names; 9 with Christian names (only) ; 3 with other names; 9 with circumstance of birth.

There are also 4 women with African names; 25 with Christian names (only); 1 with other names; 12 with circumstance of birth .

Additionally, there are 17 children with only their Christian names.

African names: (there are the same as the first list)

Angola 3

Anchico 3

Buila 2

Carabali 3

Lamba 1

matamba 4

Malemba 1

Mandinga 2

Mutema 1

Montenima 1

Tamango 1.

Bañón 3

Neither American nor African names

Portuguese 2

Flamenca 3

Circumstance of birth and racial blending

Negro criollo 42 (Black criollo)

Moreno criollo 1 (Dark criollo)

Mulata criolla 1(Mulatto criollo)
Moreno (Dark)

Appendix N° 3.

Doc. N° 20

This document also lists seven men with African names, as followed: Antonio, Mina, runaway; Francisco, Mina, sick; José, Mina, blind; J. Francisco Luango, Bartolico, Luango, Luis José: Luango. (These last three between 20 and 18 years old, single men). No women appear with African names or other names except the Christian ones.

AppdxN° 4

Doc. N°145

a) Only three of them were distinguished by other surnames: Picivier (probably from the French Antilles. According to Sánchez Alborno: "At the beginning of the 19th century, in 1801, Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Jacobin Negro Champion of the Independence of Haiti was the first to declare the abolition of slavery, thus confirming the achievement of former slaves who had won their freedom through force of arms" (The population in Latin America, p.143). The revolt in Haiti was very important for the rest of America. In the specific case of Venezuela Alejandro Petion, gave strong support to Bolivar, when he faced serious problems during the Independence War(1815-16). Another fact which might also confirm the strong relationship between the islands and Venezuela the case of the Venezuelan town Macuro the first place where Colon landed in the Continent in 1498. The majority of the populace came from Trinidad, at the end of the 18th century; but they were runaway slaves from the French Antilles, who could not stay in Trinidad and went to this part of the coast of Venezuela, which can be reached by boat in one a half hours. Nowadays the elders in Macuro, still speak the ancient French language from the Antilles. Also the architecture of the place, today, mostly in ruins, were the Antillan type, not related to the Spanish heritage. Antonio Mina,(African), and Patanemos (name of a Venezuelan town, whose populace is mainly black).

62 houses and 297 slaves were registered, distributed as follow: 73 men; 104 women; 64 girls and 56 boys.

Appendix II

A. Sangueos

A1

The tablecloth has four corners
and four corners has the table
four are the gospels
that are preached in church.
Loe, loe, loa, St. John the Baptist with joy(refrain)

A2

The little eyes of the Baptist
are serene eyes
they do not deserve to cry
but rather, that others cry for them.

A3

If you want me to have
 a happy memory of this world
 I will wear proud father
 Your silver hair."

A4.

Loee loea loee Ay! lo lo loa (Chorus)
 Loee loee because I love you so much.

Chorus

Where is Saint John going with his printed dress

Chorus

Ay! The flowers of the cemetery no longer want to bloom.

Chorus

(Unintelligible verses follow.)1984. Yolanda Almenar.

A5

If you want me to take
 I will take the copy
 That the painter made
 Of my mother whom I adored.

A6

Saint John the Baptist told me
 To go to Sierra Morena
 To go and bring him
 The flower of the mint plant.

A7

A member came to your door
 Dressed as a peacock
 Get up so you can see
 The national flag.

A8

The firefly which gives light has arrived
 The light maker has arrived
 The one who strolled from your living room
 To your corridor has arrived

A9

On my knees upon the floor
 I have come to be forgiven by thee
 If I don't deserve to live
 I have come so thou canst take my life

A. 10

Everything is pretty and happy
 Everything is music and reason
 Everything is like the diamond
 Before the light of the carbon-flame.
 (Informant: Yolanda Almenar.)

B .Cantos de Sirena**B.1**

Brígida:

- I gave him candle, I gave him look, Saint John does not eat ribbon,
 Saint John does not eat ribbon, and I gave him candle.

Sabina:

- What I do not deserve, ah, Saint John the Baptist, ah! my hat deserves.

Brígida:

-Your hat, your hat deserves it, what you do not deserve, Baptist, what you do not deserve, you, John, your hat deserves.

Berta:

- You have, I do not want in that glass, I do not want in that glass, Candidita, I want in a glass of gold.

Cándida:

-That is why you are going to be the first, my sisters, that is why you are going to be the first ah! to use this pretty wine glass

María Tecla:

-Pretty wine glass, my captain (female) that Cándida is going to offer us, ladies and gentlemen, is going to offer us, ah! she belongs to Saint John the Baptist, to the old Society.

Cándida:

-Ay! Society, Ay! to the old Society, my ladies and gentlemen, my sisters, the members (female) who are new, Berta, and all who are present, ay! now they know me (...)

Berta:

-Society, to the old Society, Candidita, because your legs are already hurting you, my sister, ay! your legs are already hurting you, and you are not good for anything, ah.

Cándida:

-Ay! for anything, that new society, ladies, don't ask for me, because I go forward and backward, ah.

Edith:

-And backwards, ay! Forward backward, my "socia" (female fellow member), mine, look, ay!, my "socia" mine, today we have to meet.

Brígida:

-Find, ay! find, ay! We have to meet, ay! we came out of your house, Candida, ay! we have come to remember.

Berta:

-To remember when I came the first I said, that I would not come any more, ay! I had a wheelbarrow, my sister, ay! where we were going to take her, ah.

Marcolina:

-Ay! to take her, we had the wheelbarrow, ay! we had the wheelbarrow where we were going her. (1984)

B.2

Sabina:

-Your body fell in a hole, the palace of the worms.

Berta:

-Of the worms, the palace of the worms, your body fell in a hole in the palace of the worms.

María Tecla:

-Of the worms, the palace of the worms (.....) the Sovereign Father.

Berta:

-Ay! Saint John, I work all year long, I work all year long, Maria, ah, to get money.

Sabina:

-Money ay! I work all year long, Brígida, I work all year long, to get money, ah.

Edith:

-To get money, I work all year long to get money, oh.

María Tecla:

-Ay! Lusiana gave him a horse, ay! What does Maria Herrera say, look, where (...) he can fill his purse.

Berta:

-Her purse, take 50 "bolos" (bolívares), ay! In the name of God, for Dolores, ah, so that he might give his health, Natalia, ay! In the name of Dolores.

Sabina:

-Of Dolores, ay! He has 50 bolívares so that he might give his health, ay! In the name of Dolores, ah.

Natalia:

-Ay! Of Dolores (.....) Here is 50 bolívares, ay! In the name of Dolores.

Berta:

-Ay! Of Dolores, here you have the medicines right now, because I have come to cure her, for if my medicines do not work, ay! I will take them back again.

Sabina:

-Ay! take them back, ah, if the medicines do not work, ay! If the medicines do not work, ay! I will take them back again, ah.

Natalia:

-Ay! Take them back, if the medicines do not work, Saint John the Baptist, I will take them back again, ah.

Edith:

-Take them back, ay! Tell Dolores for me, Edita, that I am bringing her medicines because I am going to cure her, if my medicines do not work, I will take them back again, ah. (1984)

B.3.

Cándida , Berta, María Tecla, Eddy, Yolanda , Sabina

-Oh, buried, she was buried, oh when

-Buried, you too would be buried, but you , Candida, have Juan's face to look at.

-Face to look at, whose face you can look at, but that was John the Baptist, my love, and you did not return.

-Oh, no, Juan said no to me, oh, he has a pain in his back, look, when...

-It has been a long time since Julito sang, oh, it has been a long time since Julito sang, since the time he sang in Valencia

-Oh, in Valencia, Oh, it has been a long time since Julito sang, since the time he sang in Valencia

-Oh, in Valencia, oh he sang in Valencia, my voice has given out, but I still have my knowledge left

-Oh, look, her knowledge , oh, her voice gave out, but she has her knowledge left,

-Look, her science, her voice already gave out, but she has her science left

-Oh, I leave it, or I arrived to go to St. John, nothing is hurting me and when I have spent the day of St. John, Candida, oh, I will already be killed.

-Oh, stay, you are going to stay, oh afterward, you call Julio, Candidita, so that he'll go carry you
 -Oh, carry, then call that boy, look, so that he will come and take me
 -Oh, take, there are plenty boys, Julio, to come and take her
 -Oh, to take...more than hundreds are your prayers to take to your grave, aha,
 -Go on, my love, you've been lost, show yourself, by God, woman
 -Go on, my love, you've been lost, come closer, woman, by God
 -Go on, woman, you're going, my love, who has been lost
 People, oh, go on, my love, who has been lost
 Oh, go on, oh, show yourself, by God woman.
 -Oh, women, oh, I went up to the clouds, I went up to the clouds, oh, to draw with the flowers,
 -Oh with the flowers, I went up to the clouds, I went up to the clouds, Candida, to discuss with you
 -Oh, with you, oh, I went up to the clouds, oh I went up to the cloud, oh, to draw with the flowers
 -I didn't know, oh, it was because I didn't know, oh, that I hadn't answered you, Sabina, oh, because I didn't know
 -Oh, she didn't know, it was because she didn't know, oh, I'm going home, Sabina, to prepare food, because I can't go around, people, with my belly empty,
 -Oh, with your belly empty, I am taking up the hour, oh, I am taking up the hour
 -Oh, taking up the hour until midday, ah
 -Oh, Midday, look, it's raining far away and to notify you I'm going to make this little verse so I can leave..In the name of the Eternal Father, that He may free you from original sin.
 -Hail Mary Most Pure. Amen.

B4

Cándida:

- Ay! The flowers with their perfume, ay! The flowers with their perfume and the birds
 with their song, ah.

Natalia:

- With their song, ay! The flowers with their perfume, Baptist, ay! The flowers with their song, ah.

Cándida:

- Ay! With their song, ay! The birds with their song, my love, ay! Hurry, Saint John the Baptist because you are not going to arrive, ah.

Natalia:

- With their perfume and the birds with their perfume and the birds with their song, I have come to tell you, Saint John, ay! that they are celebrating your saint's day.

Cándida:

-Ah! They have come to tell you, ay! They have come to tell you, my father, that they are celebrating your saint's day, ah!

Natalia:

-Ay! Arrive, because you are about to arrive, we are all of us little ones (female)together, my love, ay! we are lacking a principal.

Sabina:

-Ay! Principal, ay! we are all of us little ones together, eh, Saint John the Baptist, we are all of us little ones together and we are lacking a principal.

María Tecla:

-Ay! Principal and we are lacking a principal, we are all of us little ones together and we are lacking a principal.

Unidentified singer:

-In the palace of the worms, but your spirit is, Saint John the Baptist, in the palace of the sovereign.

Unidentified singer:

-Ay! Sovereign, ay! But your spirit is, but your spirit is with the sovereign God.

Unidentified singer:

- Ay! His body fell in a hole, his body fell in a hole in the palace of the worms, look.

Brígida:

-Of the worms, ay! His body fell in a hole, his body fell in a hole, my love, in the palace of the worms.

Sabina:

-Of the worms, his body fell in a hole, his body fell in a hole in the palace of the worms.

Brígida:

-Of the worms, ay! His body fell in a hole, his body ay! fell in a hole, my father, in the palace of the worms, ah.

María Tecla:

-The worms, in the palace of the worms, Saint John the Baptist, ay!, but your spirit is, but your spirit is, Saint John the Baptist, ay! but your spirit is with the Sovereign Father.

Brígida:

-Ay! Sovereign, ay! His body is, ay! his body is, Saint John the Baptist, with the Sovereign Father.

Sabina:

-Ay! Sovereign, it seems his body is, it seems that his body is with the Sovereign Father.

B5

Edith:

- Bautista's little eyes, Bautista's little eyes are serene.

Sabina:

-Ay! Serene, John the Baptist, the eyes of John the Baptist are serene, they do not deserve that I weep, if I do not weep for them.

Berta:

-For them, look at Isora's face [Sabina's daughter] , look at Isora's face, at how she has it covered.

Edith:

-People, I am the dead one, even though the dead do not talk, ladies and gentlemen, I am the dead one, even though the dead do not talk.

Berta:

-Do not talk, since they have it covered up, she did not take out the flag last night, to come and "sanguear".

Sabina:

-When she was playing it, I am going to stop her, so that she may know her duties, ay! she is good for nothing.

Berta:

-Ay! For, because I am keeping Isora punished, Sabina.

Edith:

-Ladies and gentlemen, I am the dead one, even though the dead do not speak, I am the one they buried, at the foot of the green palm.

Berta:

-Green palm, Ay! Ladies and gentlemen, I am the dead one, ay! ladies and gentlemen, I am the dead one, even though the dead do not speak.

Sabina:

-Do not speak, I am the one who is buried, I am the one who is buried at the foot of a green palm.

Unidentified singer:

-Sovereign, because his spirit is, because his spirit is, ay! with the Sovereign Father.

B5. Children imitating the *sanjuaneras*

Arelis (girl): The lighter arrived, the lighter arrived, the 'cucuy' which lights

Mao(boy): which lights, the lighter arrived, the lighter arrived, the cucuy which lights

Hormiga(girl) : The one which goes for a walk, the one which walks from your living room and corridor.

Oscar(boy): from the corridor, from your living room and corridor.

Edita get out of this place, Edita, Mocho arrived.

Hormiga: Ah, Ah, Mocho , Mocho is sleeping , Ay, Mocho get out of this place

Oscar: get out of this place, Mocho is sleeping and we could wake him up

Arelis: To wake him up, we could wake him up, Mocho is sleeping.

Chipilín: He is sleeping, Ay Mocho is sleeping Ay and he could wake him up.

Oscar: to wake him up, and tell him that Saint John was beautiful last night but Sabina is coming

Santo: Ay, Sabina is coming to Edita's house to eat her food

Oscar: Sabina is here. She eats a lot of food. Ay, Sabina get angry because Edita doesn't give her the food.

Hormiga: Ay! food, food, Sabina get angry because she wants to eat all the food.

Oscar: All the food, she ate all the food, and where is señora Edita?

Mao: Evarista, señora Evarista is here, look how she arrives

Oscar: Ay! Arelis come to sing, you aren't useful for anything

Mao: Come to sing, look Arelis come to sing. If you don't sing I'm going to give you a smack

Hormiga: Give you a smack, look Arelis, come to sing, if you don't sing..

Oscar: I Give you a smack, I'll give Culula a smack because she doesn't come to sing and dance to the drums.

Arelis: drums, Culula doesn't want to dance to the drums, Culula doesn't, but she has to dance

Hormiga: Dance, the duck tail, the duck tail, she doesn't want to sing

Oscar: What happens with Tati, she has only one ear, It seems to happen in Corpus

Mao: In Corpus, Nestor hit her, he hit her , because she came in between
 Hormiga: Ay, she came in between, no, she didn't come in between
 Santo: She came in between, in the middle because I was seeing her
 Hormiga: I was seeing too, she didn't come in between
 Santo: She came in between, she fell down
 Mao: She fell down , so Nestor hit her
 Santo: In the hospital they made a stitch to her.
 Hormiga: Ay! from school , Santo, first you was sent off , Santo to say rudeness to the teacher
 Mao: Ay! the teacher Ay! Santo was sent off, Santo.. to steal the desks
 Santo: The desk, because you said rudeness to my teacher
 Hormiga: to my teacher, you did , you said to her rudeness.
 Santo: This was said for Oscar Ignacio Morillo, because you picked him up. You are a liar, because you are telling lies, I didn't say rudeness to the teacher I did give a mass of rock.
 Arelis: I would like to know, I would like to know the five Aragua's towns
 Mao: Ay! from Aragua, I would like to know, the five Aragua's towns
 Oscar: Ay! from Aragua: la Victoria, San Mateo, La Villa , Turmero and Cagua
 Arelis: Turmero and Cagua, La Villa, Turmero and Cagua. I would like to know
 Santo: Ay! I would like to know the five Aragua's towns, why don't you go there, but yesterday you have birthday.
 Hormiga: She was ten yesterday, we celebrated because she was ten years old yesterday
 Arelis: It was celebrated, I was ten years old yesterday, it was celebrated...."

C. Golpes

C1.

Light the candle, light the candle,
 Light the candle, Gregoria, light the candle (Chorus)

Ay loo, if you don't light it by day
 If you don't light it by day
 I won't light it now

Chorus

Light the candle, Gregoria,
 Look, it has gone out on you

Chorus

If you don't have anyone to light it
 If you don't have anyone to light it
 I will light it for you

Chorus

Ay loo, they say that because I sing
 Ay loo, they say that because I sing
 I should eat alum

Chorus

Light the candle, I should eat alum

Because I begin to sing, Saturday,
Sunday and Monday

Chorus

Light the candle, whoever should call me black
Light the candle, whoever should call me black
I will put a holy crown on him

Chorus

I will put a holy crown on him
Because in black was dressed
The Holy Father of Rome

Chorus

Light the candle, I'm leaving now, I'm saying good-bye
Light the candle, I'm leaving now, I'm saying good-bye
And I spread my wings to the wind
Your house looks like a niche
Light the candle where
The sacrament is

Chorus

Ay loe, take out the little gourd
When I was going to urinate

Chorus

ay loe, tomorrow when I leave
Who is going to remember me

Chorus

Light the candle, only my little black man
Because of the kiss I gave him

Chorus

Ay loo, everyone who hears me sing
Will can see, how happy he is

Chorus

Light the candle, will say how happy
he is, but my heart is
More bitter than bile

Chorus

Ay loe, light the candle, tomorrow I die
For me, the world is finished
For me, the world is finished

Chorus

Light the candle, for me the world is finished
The streets I used to walk in will dress in mourning
The streets I used to walk in will dress in mourning

Chorus

C2

Don't break it, don't break it drummer
don't break (choir)

The drummers' hands are to be worship
don't break it
so they can play joyfully
when I get ready to sing
don't break it
and the day that I leave ,

the day that I leave
to whom will I care my wisdom (science)
Loo! to whom will I leave my science,
I will leave it to my children
so they can sing in Valencia
Don't break it ,
Cupide gave me a hook
so as to fish in the river
Loo! and even if I don't catch it,
I leave it wounded.
(D1. 1984. Informant Yolanda Almenar.
Anonymous, St. John Society)

C3.

Spoon, Spoon
Spoon, spoon, grab my spoon (choir)
Famous spoon
spoon from the town of Chuao
grab my "tapara"
to be able to grab the spoon
if you give me my cup of soup
that soup is delicious
dance to it black man
Ay! I want to eat it
spoon of wood
spoon of iron spoon, spoon.
(D1. Informant and composer Yolanda Almenar.).

C4

Ay bright star, ay bright star
Little bright star of the morning
lend me your clarity (choir)

Ay! bright star
your clarity to illuminate
the steps of my lover
who is leaving
Ay! bright star,
tonight with the moon,
tomorrow with the sun
tomorrow with the sun
tonight I'm on duty,
tomorrow "de turnante"
and tomorrow "de turnante"
the day after tomorrow
nobody will be able
to put up with me (o devil)/
Ay! bright star, bright star
the sun told the moon,
woman get inside
Ay! bright star, bright star
because a woman of substance
doesn't go out at night.

(D.1 Informant Yolanda Almenar,
Anonymous, St. John Society)

C5

Cunt burns
throw water (choir)

Cunt burns
throw water
it is burning
Maria's cunt burn
throw water at her
Peter extinguishes it
throw water at her
Lucia's cunt burns
throw water at her
Luisa's cunt burns
throw water at her
It is burnning
throw water at her
Yolanda's cunt burns
throw water at her
throw water
if it is burns
if the cunt burns
throw water at it
it burns, it burns
throw water at her.

(D1. Informant Yolanda Almenar.
Composer: Natalia Ladera.)

C6

Scrape the cassava , knead the cassava bread
Scrape it well Maria since you know how (choir)
since this is Marcolina cassava
Scrape the cassava,
loo because the cassava
is scrape with the coffee
Loe Beautiful the one that is dancing
the rose with the carnation
loo the rose that defoliates
and the carnation to be pick up
Scrape the cassava,
knead it right now,
because the cassava bread must be done
Scrape the cassava,
extract from it the "yare" (the rest) ,
scrape the cassava since you know how
I want to grab that starch
because I want to eat
the cassava bread
Scrape the cassava,
I say goodbye , farewell

until next year, until next year,
scrape the cassava,
if God will keep me alive.
(D1.Informant: Yolanda Almenar.
Composer : Anonymous, St. John Society.)

D. Fulia

Cumané (correct word: Cumanés)
Aja (Chorus, which is repeated after each verse)
Cumane why didn't you come
Cumane why didn't you come yesterday
Cumane because I was having fun
Cumane with Isabel the ungrateful
Cumane may mother gave me some advice
Cumane may father told me so
Cumane my father told me not peep
Cumane not to peep at an engaged man
My mother gave me some advice
Cumane but it was advice from a mother
Cumane affection with everybody
Cumane but trust with nobody
Cumane take this little golden cup
Cumane look what it carries inside
Cumane it carries love and it carries jealousy
Cumane and it carries a little bit of feeling
Cumane you send me word
Cumane in a little white paper
Cumane how can I love you
Cumane if I am in the town
and you are in the country
Cumane I don't drink "aguardiente"
(strong drink made of sugar cane)
Cumane because just
to look at it makes me sick
Cumane I don't drink in a bottle
Cumane but I drink from a (batea) sink
Cumane dark girl if you love me
Cumane don't tell anybody
Cumane put your hand in your chest
Cumane tell your heart to be quiet
Cumane I felt in love with you
Cumane and the moon deceived me
Cumane the moon doesn't deceive anyone
Cumane but the deceived one was me
Cumane the cock sings at one
Cumane the coward sings at two
And at three I will sing
Cumane because you arrived late
Cumane girl dress in mourning
Cumane tell me who die for you
Cumane if your lover die
Cumane don't cry I'm here.
(Natalia, leader singer, 1984)

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